ONLY THE RING FINGER KNOWS

その指だけが知っている

By
Satoru Kannagi
Hotaru Odagiri

DMP

YAOI SERIES

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IT'S THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF LOVE –

to wear matching rings with yonr significant other, showing the world that you are a couple.

High school student, Wataru Fujii, also wears one though he is single. When he accidentally switches rings with popular and handsome senior, Yuichi Kazuki, they discover that their rings pair up! Since then, Kazuki, who is known for being kind to all becomes strangely harsh to Wataru. They alternate between hot and cold, as in between clashes they begin to sort their feelings for one another. Are Wataru and Kazuki the worst of enemies or are they actually soulmates?

Already a popular genre in Japan, especially among females, Yaoi, also known as the "Boy's Love" genre, is becoming a rising phenomenon in North America. As one of the top titles of its genre in Japan, *Only The Ring Finger Knows,* will sure to engage readers to a world of intimacy and unique emotion that is solely yaoi manga.

MANGA / ROMANCE / DRAMA
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YA FOR YOUNG ADULTS 16+

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NATIVE MANGA
READ RIGHT TO LEFT

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HANDSOME, INTELLIGENT...
TALL AND POPULAR...
KIND AND GENTLE TO EVERYONE HE MEETS...
HE'S LIKE A DIAGRAM FOR THE PERFECT HUMAN BEING...

ONLY THE RING FINGER KNOWS

CONTENTS

Ring 1 - 3
Ring 2 - 51
Ring 3 - 97
Ring 4 - 143

Special Extra Episode – The Two Princes - 201

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Ring.1 その指だけが知っている

WHY?!
WHY AM I SO UNLUCKY?!
WHY IN THE WORLD...
... ARE THERE PERFECT BEINGS LIKE THAT KAZUKI?!
HUH?
NO, THAT'S NOT THE POINT!
THE POINT IS...
WHY DOES HE EXIST IN SOME REGULAR OLD PRIVATE SCHOOL LIKE OURS...
AND AN UPPERCLASS-MAN, OF ALL THINGS!
WAAAAHHHH

IT'S THE SAME WITH ME.
THE YUICHI KAZUKI I SEE FROM AFAR...
...ALWAYS WEARS A GENTLE SMILE.
HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY WEIRD FRIENDS, EITHER...
CAN'T TELL KAWAMURA THIS, BUT...
AND THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM TREAT HIM NORMALLY...
HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A SNOB.
...AND I RATHER LIKE HIM.
YUP, THAT'S RIGHT. THE RINGS. THEY'RE ALL THE RAGE IN OUR SCHOOL.
HA HA
WHA..?! NO WAY...
THOSE...
AND I BOUGHT THESE MATCHING RINGS FOR NOTHING...
ARRRGH!

I'M IN LOVE WITH UPPER-CLASSMAN KAZUKI..."
Sigh
AND THE REASON IS YUICHI KAZUKI.
HE WAS DUMPED TODAY.
BY MAI TACHIBANA, THE CLASS HOTTIE.
"I'M SORRY, BUT...
MAN, KAWAMURA'S A WRECK..
THERE'S A REASON FOR KAWAMURA'S BAD MOOD.
FORCED TO JOIN DRINKING BINGE.
IN KAWAMURA'S ROOM
だばだば
GULP GULP
DAMN! IT'S ALL THAT GUY'S FAULT!
BUT...
THOUGH YOU MIGHT THINK HE'D HAVE ALL KINDS OF GRUDGES AGAINST HIM,
I UNDERSTAND HOW KAWAMURA FEELS...
BUT I ALSO FEEL FOR YUICHI KAZUKI, BEGRUDGED JUST FOR EXISTING...
STRANGELY ENOUGH,
THERE IS HARDLY ANY WHO SPEAKS BADLY OF YUICHI KAZUKI.

IT'S NOT LIKE IT WAS EXPENSIVE OR ANYTHING, BUT I'VE HAD IT FOR A LONG TIME...
AND BECAUSE I LIKE IT, I'VE TAKEN GOOD CARE OF IT.
AND I DON'T FEEL LIKE TAKING IT OFF.
OH WELL, WHO CARES. I LIKE THIS RING.
AND I AM WEARING IT ON MY RIGHT MIDDLE FINGER...
I JUST DON'T GET THE PAIR LOOK THING...
IT'S NOT MY STYLE.
...IS A MATCH WITH HERS.
IT'S NOT LIKE THIS...
NANO DID TRY TO COAX ME INTO IT THOUGH...
YOU'VE ONLY GOT THE ONE, RIGHT?
WELL, TO EACH HIS OWN. BUT...
SINGLE GUYS USUALLY HAVE, LIKE, TWO OR THREE SPARES.
IT'S LIKE A... TREASURED, SWEET COMPANION, YOU KNOW?
MAN, WHAT A BUMMER...
IT WAS A MUTUAL BREAK-UP.
I THINK THAT'S WHAT FUELS THE RUMORS.

AND THE GREATEST STATUS OF ALL... TO WEAR MATCHING RINGS ON THE LEFT RING FINGER SIGNIFIES A COUPLE!
PAIRED RINGS ON THE RIGHT RING FINGER A SIGN OF FRIENDSHIP
OTHER RULES SUCH AS "CURRENTLY SEEKING" ALSO APPLY.
RING ON THE RIGHT MIDDLE FINGER SINGLE
ARE'N'T YOU GETTING AHEAD OF YOURSELF?!
YEAH, BUT...
MAN, I'VE SO GOT A CRUSH ON HER...
YOU'RE CLUELESS.
EVERYONE'S CHECKING OUT WHO'S WEARING WHAT RING ON WHICH FINGER.
...AND THAT YOU'VE STILL GOT THE HOTS FOR YOUR EX-GIRLFRIEND!
WHA..!
THERE'S A RUMOR GOING AROUND THAT YOU NEVER TAKE OFF THAT RING...
TSK
THIS RING'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH NANO!
EVEN NOW...

DING
DONG
HAVING A BAD MORNING?
ARE YOU OK, WATARU?!
THUD
POUND
POUND
...MY HEAD...
THIS SUCKS!
URRGHHHH...
KAWAMURA... PLEASE... QUIET...
DO YA?!
OR GET SOME ASPIRIN?!
YOU NEED TO GO TO THE INFIRMARY?!
DOWN...
HUFF, HUFF... I NEED TO GET AWAY FROM YOU... WONDER WHY...
I'M... GONNA GO WASH MY FACE...
HEYYYY... WHERE YA GOIN'?
THE RING'LL TARNISH IF I DON'T TAKE IT OFF...
SILVER...
OH...
LURCH
DAMN, WHY DOESN'T KAWAMURA HAVE A HANG-OVER?
I DON'T GET IT...

WHAT?! STILL THINKING THAT...?
IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT YUICHI KAZUKI!!!!!
IF THINGS HAD GONE ACCORDING TO PLAN, I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN MAI...
...AND WE WOULD NOW BE GAZING LOVINGLY AT OUR PAIRED RINGS...
LUCKY YOU...
KAWAMURA RANTED ON AND ON...
I'LL KEEP YOU COMPANY.
OK, OK.
LET'S DRINK TONIGHT.
...BUT I DIDN'T REALLY THINK BADLY OF YUICHI KAZUKI...
URRRRGHH!
DAMN!
OH...
...UNTIL THEN.

OH...
TH... THANK YOU.
SNIFF
THE CLEAN SMELL OF SOAP...
A BIG DIFFERENCE FROM SOMEONE LIKE ME...
WHO HAS THE SAME HANDKERCHIEF IN HIS POCKET DAY AFTER DAY...
UMM... THANKS.
I'LL GIVE IT BACK WHEN IT'S BEEN...
WASHED...
HUH?

OOPS!
I'M SORRY, DID I GET YOU?
SPLASH!
URRGH, I FEEL LIKE CRAP...
SPLASH
SPLISH
IT'S ALL RIGHT, I DIDN'T GET SPLASHED THAT BADLY.
YOUR BANGS ARE SOAKED.
WANNA DRY OFF?

UHHHH...
UMMM...
ME!
AND HE'S EVEN LENDING ME HIS HANDKERCHIEF!
TALK ABOUT AWKWARD!
THE GUY WE TALKED ABOUT ALL NIGHT IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME!
I'VE NEVER BEEN TREATED SO CASUALLY BY SOMEONE I HAVEN'T EVEN MET BEFORE.
AND BY AN UNDERCLASSMAN, NO LESS.
HMPH!
UH, NO, I...
CRAP
I'M SORRY...
HUH?... HIS EXPRESSION...
TH... THE REAL THING!
YUICHI KAZUKI...!
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?
...
...
WHAT...

DON'T WORRY.
I WON'T COME BACK.
THE SENIORS' FLOOR IS THE FOURTH!
PATHETIC COUNTER-ATTACK
WELL SORRRRY...
IT WAS CROWDED ON THE UPPER FLOOR.
S... SO WHAT! THIS IS THE THIRD FLOOR!
DON'T LOOK DOWN AT ME!
YEAH I'M SHORT, SO WHAT!
WHAT, ARE YOU MOCKING ME, YOU JERK?!
W...
WAIT!
ISN'T THAT MORE RUDE THAN JUST ACTING CASUAL?!
I CAN'T JUST BACK OFF...
Y...
YOUR INSULTING TONE...

HMMPH!
BECAUSE OF YOUR CLUMSY SPLASHING,
MY UNIFORM'S GOTTEN SOAKED...
...BUT AGAIN, WHATEVER.
WHAT-EVER.
WHA...!
I MOST CERTAINLY DO NOT!!
WHEN YOU SEE A CELEBRITY ON THE STREET,
I BET YOU POINT AND YELL, "IT'S WHATS-HIS-NAME!" RIGHT?
BUT...
LET ME JUST SAY ONE THING.
ZOOM
WASH YOUR FACE AT HOME.

DON'T ORDER ME AROUND.
WH...
WHAT WAS THAT...?

WATARU FUJII!
DON'T FORGET IT!
W... WELL....!
...AND?
...I ...I MEAN ...I HAVE A NAME!
FINE.
W... WHAT
THIS IS FOR WATARU FUJII.

KA-RI-N-G
DING
RING
KA-RI-N-G
HEY WATARU,
LET'S GO TO LUNCH.
THE ONE I ALWAYS WEAR.
GAINED WHERE?
IF ANY-THING, YOU'RE SKINNY!
BWA HA HA HA
WHAT'S THAT, A JOKE?
IT'S NOT THAT... I JUST THOUGHT I SHOULD GO ON A DIET.
I THINK I'VE GAINED WEIGHT.
HUH?!
UM, NO, I'M NOT... UH...
WHAT, YOUR HEAD STILL HURTING?
I TRIED TO PUT IT ON AGAIN AFTER I WASHED MY FACE...
AND NOW IT WON'T FIT.
THE RING?
BUT THE RING...
IT WON'T FIT.

WHAT GENTLE HONOR STUDENT?!
HE'S GOT EVERYONE DUPED!
THEY'RE FOOLED BY HIS LOOKS!
BLEW MY HEADACHE AWAY.
...HE THOUGHT I WAS OVERLY FAMILIAR..
ALL THAT ATTITUDE JUST BECAUSE...
SHIT
....
...HUH?
THAT CONDESCENDING ATTITUDE,
THOSE CRUEL EYES,
THAT SARCASTIC TONE...
HE'S NOT LIKE WHAT THEY SAY AT ALL!

WHY IS HE HERE?
HEY, HEY, ISN'T THAT...
YUICHI KAZUKI?
K... KAZUKI?!
THUMP
HE SPOTTED ME!
UGH!
HUH?
WHY..
HE'S COMING, WATARU!
HE'S COMING OVER HERE!
MURMUR
IT'S THE REAL THING!

YEAH
...THAT IS WEIRD.
BUT CAN PEOPLE GAIN THAT MUCH WEIGHT SO SUDDENLY?
NO. BUT A RING CAN'T SUDDENLY SHRINK, EITHER...
SEE?
IT FITS MY RING FINGER THOUGH... WEIRD.
YEAH... BUT IT SHOULD FIT MY MIDDLE FINGER AND NOW IT'S TOO TIGHT...
WHAAAA? WEREN'T YOU WEARING IT THIS MORNING?
WHOAA!!
WHAA? WHY?
MURMUR
NO WAY...
HEY, LOOK...
WHA...
... HEY!
WH... WHAT'S GOING ON?

!
STARE
BLUSH
I... I SAID..
WHAT AM I ADMIRING HIM FOR?
I TOLD YOU, MY NAME IS...
WATARU FUJII, I KNOW.
EEK!
HE'S DREAMY!
HUH?
EASILY MANIPULATED
...RETURN?
I CAME TO RETURN THIS.
PUT OUT YOUR HAND.

...HEY, YOU!
YIKES!
YOU CAN HEAR ME, ANSWER ME.
I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE THIS FROM Y...
YOU KNOW...
SLAM!!!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME!
ANYWAY, HURRY UP AND GIVE ME BACK MY RING.
IT'S NOT AS IF...
I LIKE WEARING A PAIRED RING WITH YOU.
Sooo
HERE!
MMPH
BUT A FRIEND MADE THAT SPECIALLY AND IT'S PRECIOUS TO ME.

IT'S SILVER WITH A GOLD CENTER LINE.
A RING? HUH...?
YOU TOOK MINE BY MISTAKE, DIDN'T YOU?
WE MUST'VE SWITCHED AT THE WATER FOUNTAIN.
THIS IS THE SAME AS MINE...
I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT EITHER.
HURRY UP AND GIVE IT BACK.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU HAVE THE SAME RING AS ME?!
"MY RING"?
HUH?!
S...SERIOUSLY!?!
WOW, THEY ARE THE SAME!
I ALWAYS WEAR IT ON MY MIDDLE FINGER, BUT...
NO WONDER IT SUDDENLY ONLY FITS MY RING FINGER!
IT'S TRUE... THIS ONE'S MINE.
I CAN TELL FROM THE SCRATCHES.
THE YUICHI KAZUKI HAS THE SAME RING AS MINE?

...!
W... WHA...
...SAME HERE!!
THAT'S RIGHT.
IN OTHER WORDS,
A PLACE THAT'S WORTHLESS FOR THE RING TO FIT.
THE LEFT... RING FINGER...?
IT FIT PERFECTLY ON MY LEFT RING FINGER, THOUGH.
MY RIGHT AND LEFT HANDS HAVE DIFFERENT FINGER WIDTHS.
IT WOULD CAUSE A RIOT IF I HAD TO WEAR IT ON MY RING FINGER.
THAT'S WHY I HAD TO GET THIS RING BACK.
AND ANYWAY, IT'S CREEPY BEING PAIRED UP WITH A GUY.

THE BEAUTIFUL ARE LUCKY.
...THE RINGS WERE SWITCHED.
BUT GOOD JOB YOU NOTICED THAT...
...I ALREADY KNOW THAT.
THAT SAME RING LOOKS DIFFERENT ON HIM, WATARU.
HMOH
IT LOOKS CLASSIER.
THE RING LOOKS GOOD ON HIM.
WHAT!
MOST PEOPLE WOULD REALIZE IT THE MINUTE THEY TRIED IT ON.
IT DIDN'T EVEN OCCUR TO ME.
I THOUGHT MAYBE I GOT FAT...
... AND YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE NEXT TO ME.
THE ONLY TIME I REMOVED THIS WAS AT THE WATER FOUNTAIN...
DUMMY...
I BELIEVED HIM TOO.
DUM...!
WHAT ARE YOU, A DUMMY?
TO THINK THAT IN HALF A DAY YOU GOT FAT...
ON ME, IT WAS LOOSE ON MY RIGHT MIDDLE FINGER.
IT WAS TIGHT ON YOU, RIGHT?

HE CONTROLS THE CONVERSATION.
HE SAYS WHAT HE WANTS TO SAY, THEN LEAVES.
IN THE FIRST PLACE,
HE'S THE ONE THAT TOOK THE WRONG RING.
GEEZ...
AT LEAST APOLOGIZE BEFORE LEAVING...
WHAT WAS THAT?
MUMMUR
HE'S GONE.
WHY IS HIS ATTITUDE ALWAYS SO HOSTILE?
WHEN HE LENT ME HIS HANDKERCHIEF...
HE WAS SO KIND...

UH... YEAH.
I'VE ALWAYS WORN IT.
IT'S GOT SOME YEARS ON IT, HUH?
YEAH, I LIKE IT.
IT'S MUTUAL, THEN.
...BUT THAT RING...
...I THOUGHT SO.
SEE YA.
UH... HEY...
UM...
UH... WELL...
IT WAS SO SCRATCHED UP, I WAS IMPRESSED.
I CAN SEE IT'S PRECIOUS TO YOU.
WHAT GIVES? ALL OF A SUDDEN...

YOU COULD TELL US IF YOU WANTED TO!
IT'S A LADY'S REQUEST!
WHAT? YOU MEANIE!
WHY NOT?!
SORRY, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER THE STORE
AND ANYWAY, I DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF MORE PEOPLE HAVING THE SAME RING AS MINE.
I WANT A PAIR WITH KAZUKI, TOO.
DON'T BE SO SELFISH.
THAT'S RIGHT
TELL US THE STORE.
YEAH
WAAAH?
THAT'S SO TOTALLY MEAN!
YOU JUST WANT THE RING ALL TO YOURSELF!
I'VE GOT IT!
MEANIE, MEANIE
SNAP
I SAID I DON'T KNOW AND I DON'T KNOW!!
WHO'S KEEPING IT FOR HIMSELF?!
THE STORY OF THIS RING INCIDENT...

WATARUJI
M... M... MAI!
W... WHAT?
YOU HAVE THE SAME RING AS MR. KAZUKI, RIGHT?
CLUNK
PLEEEAAASE...
TELL ME WHERE YOU BOUGHT IT.
squeal
squeal
HEY, WHAT STORE, WHAT STORE?
TELL ME!
WOOO! THAT'S GREAT! I TOTALLY WANT ONE TOO, A PAIR WITH MR. KAZUKI!
NOOO... ME TOOOOO!
HUH?! WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S A MATCH WITH MR. KAZUKI'S...
I WANT THE SAME ONE, TOO.
I... CAN'T.
W... WHA...

OR MAYBE HE WEARS IT BUT JUST TAKES IT OFF AROUND PEOPLE...
MAYBE HE JUST USED TO CARRY IT AROUND?
GUESS SO.
HE DID COME ALL THE WAY DOWN HERE JUST TO GET IT BACK.
...SO HE DIDN'T WANNA GET COPIED AND MUSTA KEPT IT SECRET.
WELL, HE PROBABLY TREASURES HIS RING TOO...
WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, ISN'T HE A WEIRDO?
DON'T LET HER WEAR A PAIRED RING WITH KAZUKI!!!!
HEY WATARU, I BEG YOU, ANYONE BUT MAI!
THEN SUDDENLY, IT JUST CAME BACK.
I'VE ACTUALLY LOST IT ONCE BEFORE.
AFTER THAT, I JUST GOT REALLY ATTACHED TO IT.
HMM-MM.
I THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO YOU...
DON'T WORRY, I REALLY DON'T REMEMBER WHERE I BOUGHT IT.
HUH...?
IT'S TRUE, BUT...
...SPREAD INSTANTLY THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL...
SIGHHH
WHAT A HASSLE.
YOU LOOK STRESSED, WATARU.
THE ENTIRE SCHOOL
I WISH THEY'D JUST GIVE UP!
EVER SINCE, GIRLS HAVE BEEN TRACKING ME DOWN TO ASK ME ABOUT THE DAMN RING.
IT'S ALL AN ACT, AN ACT!
ACCORDING TO THE GIRLS, NO ONE KNEW THAT KAZUKI EVEN WORE A RING.
THAT JERK...
HEH! THEY'RE ALL SO EASILY DUPED.
HE'S A LUCKY MAN.
THAT'S HOW POPULAR YUICHI KAZUKI IS.

YUICHI KAZUKI?!
OH, SO YOU DO KNOW HIM!
HE'S A CELEBRITY.
WHY, WHAT'S THAT GUY DONE?!
WHY IS THAT NAME COMING FROM MY LITTLE SISTER'S MOUTH?!
I KNOW, I'M SORRY!
YOU HATE THIS SORT OF THING.
...WHAT, YOU MEAN ME?!
....
I GUESS IT'S MR. KAZUKI'S BIRTHDAY SOON...
BORN IN JUNE, A GEMINI.
SHE SEEMS PRETTY SERIOUS ABOUT HIM, SO...
BUT THIS GIRL,
I TOLD HER YOU WOULDN'T.
KARIN... YOU DON'T REALLY FEEL BAD AT ALL, DO YOU...?
THAT SMILE...
IT JUST SLIPPED OUT THAT MY BIG BROTHER GOES TO RYOKUYO HIGH SCHOOL.
...ASKED ME TO FORWARD A GIFT TO HIM.
AND A CLASS-MATE OF MINE...

SO YOU'RE SAYING THE RING IS THE SAME AS KAZUKI'S BUT THE SIGNIFICANCE IS DIFFERENT?
SOME-THING LIKE THAT.
BUT...
WHEN THERE'S SUCH A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIS RING'S INFLUENCE AND MINE,
IT'S...
NOW, NOW
...KIND OF DEPRESSING.
JUST HANG ON 'TIL IT ALL DIES DOWN.
WHAT'S THIS?
A BIRTHDAY PRESENT?
IT'S NOT MY BIRTHDAY YET.
IT'S NOT FOR YOU, WATARU.
UMM... DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE AT YOUR SCHOOL..
A SENIOR NAMED YUICHI KAZUKI?
FRESHMAN AT AN ALL-GIRL'S SCHOOL

I HEAR MR. KAZUKI COMES FROM A FAMILY OF DENTISTS.
HANDSOME, TALL, INTELLI-GENT...
...AND ON TOP OF THAT, RICH!
OOOOH, WATARU!!
IF YOU HAVE A FRIEND LIKE THAT,
WHY DON'T YOU EVER BRING HIM OVER?
ANYWAY, PLEASE TAKE CARE OF THAT FOR ME?
HE MIGHT JUST IGNORE IT.
THERE'S A LETTER INSIDE...
...SO I THINK MR. KAZUKI WILL CONTACT HER.
THAT GUY PROBABLY GETS SO MANY GIFTS,
HE COULD SELL THEM FOR PROFIT.
HUH? REALLY?
THAT GUY'S NOT MY FRIEND!
FROM THAT NUANCE, I TOTALLY THOUGHT YOU WERE CLOSE!
YOU CALLED HIM "THAT GUY" SO FAMILIARLY...
HMMM
WOMEN ARE SHARP...
MMMM, BUT I'VE HEARD HE'S NOT THAT CRUEL.
...AND STILL KEEP THE GIFT. ISN'T THAT RUDE?
MOST GUYS WOULD JUST IGNORE THE WHOLE THING.
THEY SAY THAT FOR EVERY LETTER OR PRESENT HE GETS,
HE GIVES EVERY GIRL A PROPER DECLINING ANSWER.
PRETTY COOL.
WHEN THEY HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING WRONG.
AND TURNING SOMEONE DOWN IS PRETTY STRESSFUL.
THERE AREN'T MANY GUYS WHO'D APOLOGIZE AND SAY SORRY,
THEY CRY AND STUFF.
YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, WATARU?
YOU DECLINE A LOT OF THINGS.
....
SO ANYWAY, IT'S A DEAL!
PINKY PROMISE! ♡
WHY IS IT THAT I CAN NEVER SAY "NO" TO HER..?!
UHHGH!
PINKY PADDOMISE

THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT A GOOD SITUATION!
I'M SORRY, TACHIBANA...
I'M SURE YOU UNDERSTAND...
...NOT GOOD.
I CAN'T GO OUT NOW THAT I'VE HIDDEN MYSELF...
THE GUILT...
URRGH...
WHY DID I HAVE TO SNEAK AFTER KAZUKI LIKE THIS...
AND YET, A FIRM ATTITUDE THAT LEAVES NO ROOM FOR ARGUMENT.
HIS KIND VOICE,
HIS SOFT GAZE,
...CAN'T TELL KAWAMURA.
MAI TACHIBANA CONFESSING HER LOVE TO KAZUKI...
I WONDERED WHAT BUSINESS HE HAD AFTER SCHOOL IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...
I GUESS HE'S NOT POPULAR FOR NOTHING.
CRAP!
EVEN KAZUKI'S REJECTION WAS FLAWLESS...
BUT... LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION,

THE THOUGHT OF FACING YUICHI KAZUKI...
I'D BETTER CHOOSE A QUIET LOCATION...
...GIVES ME A HEAVY HEART.
CONFERENCE ROOM 2
SORRY...
BUT I CAN'T RETURN YOUR FEELINGS, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU ASK ME.
ISN'T THERE ANY CHANCE FOR ME AT ALL?
BUT...
I LOVE YOU, MR. KAZUKI.

GULP
N... NO WAY!!
...OR MAYBE YOU WERE FOLLOWING ME?
IS PEEPING A HOBBY OF YOURS?
AND ANYWAY,
YOU MAY ACT ALL COOL...
BUT INSIDE, AREN'T YOU REGRETTING IT JUST A LITTLE...
...BIT...?
WORRIED?
I... WAS WORRIED ABOUT TACHIBANA... YEAH, THAT'S IT.
IT'S NOT THAT...
M... MY FRIEND HAS A CRUSH ON HER SO...
HE ASKED ME TO CHECK UP ON HER...
HMMMMM...
HE DOESN'T BELIEVE ME...
...WANTED TO WITNESS THAT.
I... IT'S NOT LIKE I...
I CAN'T BACK DOWN.

FANCY MEETING YOU HERE.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING...
OWWWWW!
BUMP
ガーン
ガタッ
ガシャ!!
THE GIRL? SHE'S GONE HOME.
ogle, ogle
HUH!!
WHAT WERE YOU DOING HERE?
YOU...! EVERY TIME...!
...HUH?
BY THE WAY...
...CARRYING THAT BIG PACKAGE MAKES YOU LOOK EVEN SMALLER.
SING
NOT EVEN THE LEAST BIT FAZED BY A WOMAN'S TEARS..
HEY, WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
WATARU FUJII.

...HUH? WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
I'M NOT SOME CUTE GIRL...
SURE, I'M...
HEY, WAIT!
I'M LEAVING!
NOTHING!
AND I'M SURE IT CRAMPS YOUR STYLE FOR YOU TO WEAR THE SAME RING AS ME!
GIRLP
THWAK
LEGGO!!

THUMP
WHY IS IT ALWAYS...
A STERN LOOK LIKE THAT...
CLENCH
IN FRONT OF TACHIBANA...
.....
W.. WHAT IS IT?
...ONLY AT ME?
HE NEVER MADE A FACE LIKE THAT...
...THAT LOOK...
HEY
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING SO SOUR ABOUT?

HUH...?
DON'T...
...EVER FOLLOW ME AGAIN.
...I TOLD YOU IT WAS... TACHIBANA...
I WASN'T...
DID I IMAGINE IT...?
THUMP
...GO.
YOU SUCK AT LYING.
...
THE ROUGH WORDS.
THE SEVERE LOOK.
WHERE WAS THE CAPTIVATING SMILE...
I USED TO GLIMPSE...
WHERE HAS IT GONE...?
IT TURNS OUT IT ISN'T EQUAL FOR ALL.
THE KINDNESS HE SUPPOSEDLY DOLED OUT TO EVERYONE..

THE SOFT VOICE. THE GENTLE GAZE...

...NONE OF IT WAS EVER...

...DIRECTED AT ME.

WHAT DID I EVER...

...DO TO YOU...?

WHEN I THINK ABOUT THAT,

I FEEL...

...STRANGELY SAD.

Ring.1 END

FROM THE FIRST TIME WE MET,
I KNOW THE LUNCH HOUR'S OVER.
AND I CAN'T WANDER THE HALLS FOREVER
...BUT IT BOTHERS ME
I KNOW THAT.
THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO.
THAT EVERYONE WILL THINK I BROUGHT KAZUKI,
THE HONOR STUDENT WITH A REP FOR KINDNESS, YUICHI KAZUKI...
....
A BIRTHDAY PRESENT...
I DON'T KNOW WHY.
"IS PEEPING A HOBBY OF YOURS?
BUT WITH ME, HE'S COLD AND HURTFUL AND ALOOF.
DON'T EVER FOLLOW ME AGAIN."

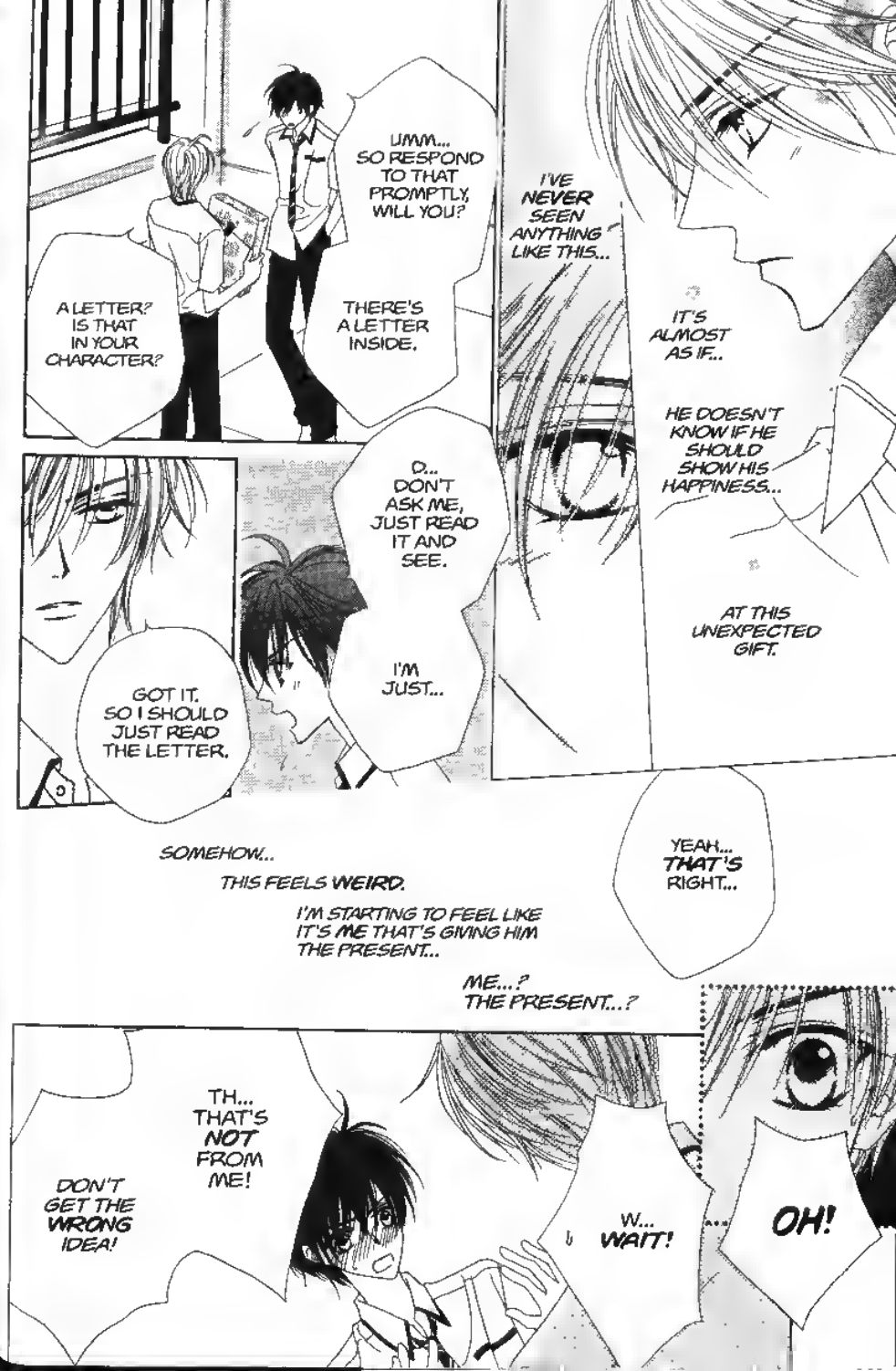
3 –
THOSE WHO SEE ME...
...PROBABLY GET THE WRONG IDEA.
CRASH
THE SIGHT OF A MALE JUNIOR STUDENT CARRYING A BIG PACKAGE...

GLARE
WELL, WELL, THE MIGHTY GIFT BEARER.
THUMP
YOU AGAIN?
WHAT DO YOU WANT NOW?
I... CAN'T TALK HERE... WILL YOU COME UPSTAIRS?
WHAT?!
BUT SOMEHOW, IT STRANGELY SUITS YOU, HUH?
THE FLORAL GIFT WRAPPING IS A NICE, FEMININE TOUCH,
BUT FIRST, I HAVE TO MAKE GOOD ON MY PROMISE.
AFTER ALL, I DID ACCEPT...
AND LEAVE RIGHT AFTER, THAT'S ALL.
I'LL JUST HAND THIS OFF...
THEN I'LL NEVER HAVE TO SEE THAT KAZUKI AGAIN.
PACK!!
...ALL THIS...
I'VE HAD ENOUGH...
AND...
THIS PAIN IN MY HEART THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
KAZUKI?
YEAH, HE'S HERE. JUST A SEC.

WHAT...
IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY SOON, RIGHT?
SO ACCEPT IT GRATEFULLY.
SUCH A GENUINE EXPRESSION...
HE'S SO POPULAR, HE MUST BE USED TO GETTING GIFTS BY NOW.
FOR ME...?
HUH?...
DIDN'T EXPECT THAT.
DOES HE ALWAYS ACT SURPRISED?

W... WAIT...
THIS IS HOW IT ALWAYS GOES!
WHA... I'M JUST...!!
YOU SURE YOU AREN'T... FUNNY THAT WAY?
YOU'VE BEEN ROAMING AROUND WITH THAT THING FOR QUITE A WHILE NOW, HAVEN'T YOU?
YOU WANT ME TO DELIVER IT FOR YOU?
WHAT? IS THERE SOMEONE IN THE SENIOR CLASS YOU WANT TO GIVE IT TO?
NEVER HEARD MY REP?
HUH? HAVEN'T YOU HEARD? I'M A NICE GUY.
WH... WHAT CHANGED YOUR TUNE?
I WISH I'D NEVER KNOWN.
...HERE.
SHOVE
...THAT THE GUY STANDING IN FRONT OF ME WITH COLD EYES...
IS KIND TO EVERYONE BUT ME...
I FORGOT ABOUT THAT THE MINUTE I MET YOU.
I WISH I REALLY COULD FORGET...
HMPH

I WAS JUST ASKED TO GIVE THAT TO YOU...
...BY SOME GIRL WHO GOES TO MY KID SISTER'S SCHOOL, SO...
OH, I GET IT.
YOU...
DO YOU KNOW WHEN MY BIRTHDAY IS?
J... JUNE THE 7TH...
BINGO.
GOOD FOR YOU.
IT'S ALREADY BACK TO NORMAL...
HIS EXPRESSION...
UMMM...
THUMP


UMM... SO RESPOND TO THAT PROMPTLY, WILL YOU?
THERE'S A LETTER INSIDE.
A LETTER? IS THAT IN YOUR CHARACTER?
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS...
IT'S ALMOST AS IF...
HE DOESN'T KNOW IF HE SHOULD SHOW HIS HAPPINESS...
AT THIS UNEXPECTED GIFT.
D... DON'T ASK ME, JUST READ IT AND SEE.
I'M JUST...
GOT IT. SO I SHOULD JUST READ THE LETTER.
SOMEHOW...
THIS FEELS WEIRD.
I'M STARTING TO FEEL LIKE IT'S ME THAT'S GIVING HIM THE PRESENT...
YEAH... THAT'S RIGHT...
ME...? THE PRESENT...?
TH... THAT'S NOT FROM ME!
DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA!
W... WAIT!
OH!

YOU MUST REALLY BE BORED.
YOU SURE ARE A PUSH-OVER.
WASTING YOUR LUNCH HOUR, RUNNING ERRANDS FOR A GIRL YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW...
WH...! I JUST... PROMISED MY SISTER THAT...
WHAT IF IT'S YOUR LITTLE SISTER?
WHAT...?
SAYING IT'S "JUST A FRIEND OF HERS"...?
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD A SISTER COMPLEX, KID.
SHUT UP! AND DON'T CALL ME KID!
WHEN IN REALITY...
むア
MRRRGHHH!
かあお
SHE'S THE ONE WITH THE HOTS FOR ME?
THEN WHAT SHOULD I CALL YOU?
W... WELL...

THANKS FOR THE SPECIAL DELIVERY.
BUT...

WATARU...
SHIVER!
BUT MY BODY FEELS WARM...
WHA..!
G...
WATARU...?
WHY..
ALL HE DID WAS SAY MY NAME...

HOW ABOUT... WATARU?
IF NOT THAT, THEN... UMMM...
JUNIOR FUJII...?
UMM... "JUNIOR FUJII"... OR...
NO, WELL, NEVER MIND THE "JUNIOR" PART...
WE'RE ON A FIRST-NAME BASIS...
SU... SUDDENLY,

HUH?
H...HEY?! THIS...!
SO LONG.
ばっ
SORRY BUT IT'S TOO BULKY, I CAN'T ACCEPT IT.
RETURN IT TO THE SENDER.
D...DON'T YOU ACCEPT PRESENTS FROM EVERYONE?
I CAN'T DO THAT!
THEN WHY...?!
WELL... IT'S TRUE, I DON'T PLAY FAVORITES.

JUST NOW... WHAT WERE YOU...
YOU SUDDENLY CLAMMED UP, I JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW YOU WOULD REACT.
...WHAT?
ALL I DID WAS SAY YOUR NAME.
C... CUT IT OUT!
SLAP!
YOU COMPLAIN TOO MUCH. BESIDES...
YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S BEING OVERLY FAMILIAR WITH A SENIOR LIKE ME.
I... I DIDN'T SAY THAT...
WHAT, DID YOU THINK I WAS GONNA KISS YOU OR SOMETHING?
D... DON'T GET FAMILIAR WITH ME!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR ATTITUDE, WATARU?
HMMM... EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE BLUSHING?

HE FLAT OUT SAID IT...
EITHER THAT OR HE MUST REALLY HATE ME...
WHY COULDN'T HE JUST ACCEPT THE GIFT?
THAT HE WOULDN'T ACCEPT IT
DID I DO SOMETHING WRONG?
THIS SUCKS...
BECAUSE I BROUGHT IT.
YEAH...
HE MUST HATE ME...
...KARIN'S GONNA KILL ME...
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!!
OOOOHHH!!!!!
BECAUSE YOU WERE THE ONE WHO BROUGHT IT.
YOU CAN CALL ME,
"SIR" KAZUKI.
OH, AND
ABOUT THE NAME THING...

ARE YOU THAT KIND OF PERSON?
BUT...
ISN'T IT UNLIKE YOU TO JUST COME SLINKING BACK,
OK, OK IT'S ALL MY FAULT.
AFTER HAVING THE GIFT THROWN BACK IN YOUR FACE?
FORCING A GIFT ON SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T WANT IT IS INSULTING TO THE GIFT.

ON THE OTHER HAND...
HE...
...
YEP.
MOM WORKING LATE AGAIN?
YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT...
I HATE TO SAY IT...
BUT DO YOU THINK MR. KAZUKI REEAALLY HATES YOU, WATARU?
THAT'S WHAT I THINK AFTER HEARING YOUR STORIES.

...WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THIS?
EVERY-THING!
LIKE, THERE'S THIS COLD SIDE OF YOU, YOU KNOW?
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS, WATARU.
WATARU, WHAT DID YOU DO?! I TOTALLY LOST FACE!!

I BET YOU'VE NEVER EVEN SERIOUSLY FELT LOVE FOR ANYONE BEFORE.
SAYING YOU WEREN'T SURE IF YOU REALLY LOVED HER OR NOT.
EVEN WITH NANO, YOU SUDDENLY BROKE UP WITH HER..
A MAN THAT WON'T LET YOU HAVE ANY FANTASIES ABOUT HIM IS NO MAN AT ALL!
hmph
KARIN, THAT GUY...
HE'S NOT THE GREAT GUY YOU ALL THINK HE IS, YOU KNOW?
ISN'T THAT WHY YOU'RE SO INDIFFERENT?!
BAM!!

I ADMIT IT.
開き直り
HUH?
DID THAT HAPPEN...?
THAT'S RIGHT! IT'S TRUE THAT I TOOK A GIFT TO YUICHI KAZUKI...
AND I'M THE FIRST PERSON IN HISTORY TO HAVE THAT GIFT THROWN BACK IN THE FACE!
WELL NO, BUT IT DOES INVOLVE KAZUKI...
W... WHAT? IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT?
YESTERDAY, AFTER YOU WENT HOME...
HE CAME TO OUR CLASS!
KAZUKI? WHY?
HE ASKED ME TO TELL HIM WHICH SCHOOL YOUR SISTER GOES TO...
...WITH THIS REALLY SERIOUS LOOK ON HIS FACE.
IT WAS ALMOST AS IF HE WAITED FOR A TIME,
WHEN HE KNEW YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE.

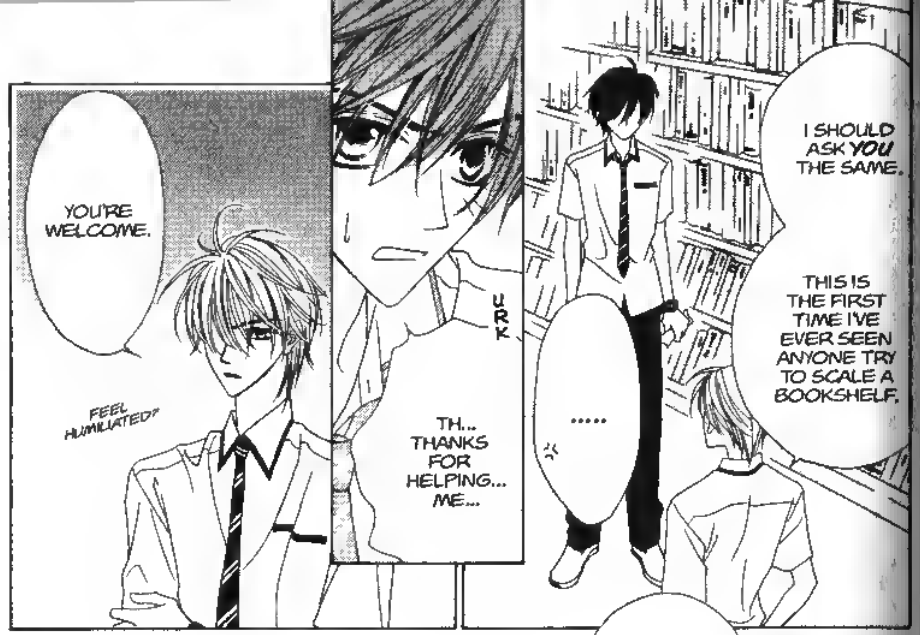
GRRRAT
BUZZ
BUZZ
BUZZ
I THOUGHT SO...
THE RUMOR HAS ALREADY SPREAD...
YOU...
STOP! KAWAMURA... DON'T SAY IT!
SHIT!
THUD
HEY WATARU!
MAYBE HE REEAALLY LIKES YOU, WATARU?

OF COURSE!
IT'S MUCH MORE BELIEVABLE THAT KAZUKI WOULD BE IN LOVE WITH YOUR SISTER THAN WITH YOU.
NO ONE WILL THINK ANYTHING OF A BROTHER DELIVERING A PRESENT FROM HIS LITTLE SISTER...
...RIGHT?
YOU THINK SO...?
EVERYONE WILL CONCLUDE THAT KAZUKI'S AFTER KARIN...
AND THE WHOLE PAIR RING INCIDENT WILL BE CHALKED UP TO BEING ABOUT YOUR SISTER!
IT'S ALL GOOD!
AND SINCE KARIN GOES TO ANOTHER SCHOOL, SHE WON'T BE TROUBLED BY ANY GOSSIP HERE...
YOU SEEM HAPPY TODAY.
KAWAMURA...
LOVE'S ARRIVAL IS NEAR... SPRING HAS COME!
EASY TO READ...
IF KAZUKI GETS A LOVE INTEREST, IT'LL BE GOOD FOR YOU...
BECAUSE THEN YOU CAN GO AFTER TACHIBANA, RIGHT?
MY MAI...
LITTLE JERK
YOOSSSS!!

COME TO THINK OF IT, THIS MORNING,
I DID HEAR A RUMOR...
...THAT KAZUKI EVEN HAD MALE ADMIRERS NOW...
BUT YOU GAVE HIM A PRESENT, RIGHT?
WELL... THAT WAS...
EVER SINCE THE RING INCIDENT, I THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE THROUGH,
BUT I GUESS YOU GUYS STILL CONNECT, HUH?
MYSTERIOUS...
WE DO NOT!
WHAT IS HE THINKING...?
UMM...
SORRY, I JUST WENT AND TOLD HIM.
DON'T MISUNDERSTAND.
THAT WAS JUST...
DON'T BE SO EASILY CONVINCED!!
BAM
BAM
OHHH, SO THAT WAS ABOUT YOU...?
grrrrr
AND BY NOW, THE STORY THAT KAZUKI CAME ASKING ABOUT YOUR SISTER SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN AROUND.
SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED...
NA HA HA
DON'T WORRY, A RUMOR LIKE THAT'LL BLOW OVER QUICKLY.

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO CARRY THEM BY MYSELF...
ALL THESE BOOKS...
AND THEY'RE THE HEAVY, HARDBOUND KIND TOO...
NO OPTIONS LEFT BUT TO CLIMB THE SHELF..
STEP
GRAB
1...
2...
AND THE STEP LADDER'S NOWHERE AROUND..
HMMM
...THERE'S NO CHOICE.
WHICH ONE?
HUH?
WHOA..!
WATCH OU...!

図書室
LIBRARY
FLAP
FLAP
FLIP
I CAN'T REACH IT...
NO GOOD
.....
CRAP... WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME...?
I'M EVEN WORKING THROUGH LUNCH HOUR
I DON'T LIKE WORKING WITH YOU!
FLAKING OFF!
SHE'S SUPPOSED TO BE ON CLASS DUTY TOO!
ANYWAY, WHERE'S TACHIBANA?!


I SHOULD ASK YOU THE SAME.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER SEEN ANYONE TRY TO SCALE A BOOKSHELF.
.....
URK
TH... THANKS FOR HELPING... ME...
YOU'RE WELCOME.
FEEL HUMILIATED?

SO... WHICH ONE IS IT?
HUH?
THE BOOK.
YOU WANTED IT, RIGHT?
TELL ME, I'LL GET IT FOR YOU.
TH...
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR...

....
SAVED..
HUH...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, IDIOT?
YOU...! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
うおぁあああ
AAAAAGGGHH!
!!!

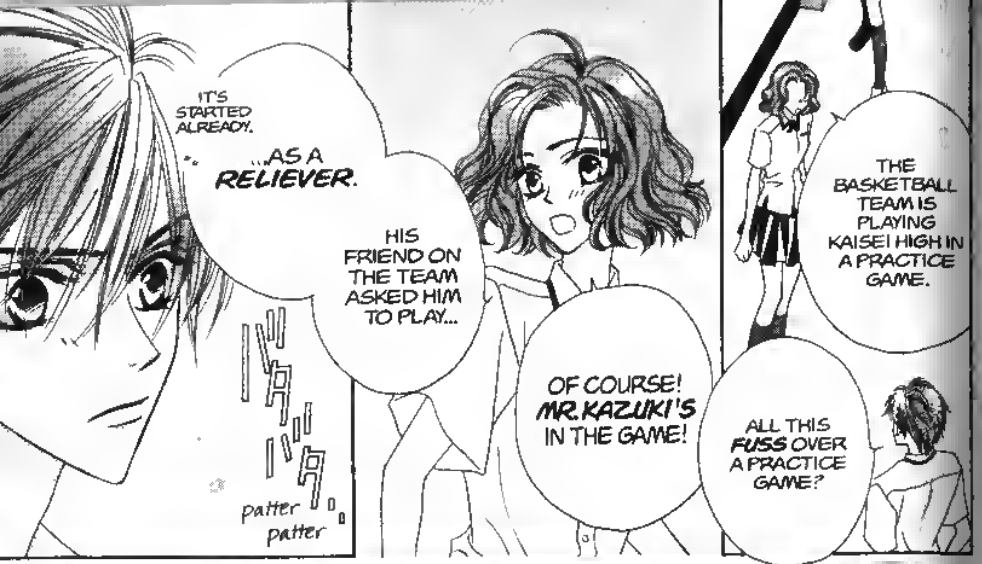
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO NICE TODAY...?
....
....
I HAD NO CHOICE. I SPOT A SHORTY WHO'S HAVING TROUBLE REACHING A BOOK.
I HAPPEN TO BE THERE AND ALSO KNOW THAT THE STEP-LADDER IS BROKEN.
SO OF COURSE, I HAVE TO HELP.
FROM THE LOOKS OF IT, YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE HERE...
YEAH... BUT...
THESE...
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THESE REFERENCE BOOKS WEREN'T PREPARED?
THEY'RE FOR THE AFTER-NOON CLASS, RIGHT?
...
....
THIS BRINGS BACK MEMORIES. I READ THE SAME BOOKS ON THESE SHELVES LAST YEAR TOO.
SUZUKI OF GRAMMAR MADE UP THIS LIST, RIGHT?
AND THE STEPLADDER'S BROKEN.
YOU HAVE REALIZED THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE AT YOUR HEIGHT, HAVEN'T YOU?
IT'S BETTER THAN CLIMBING, ISN'T IT?
スッ
S...
YOU READ...?
BUT IT'S IN ENGLISH...
UM... CAN I ASK YOU SOME-THING?
USING A DICTIONARY, YEAH.
READ 'EM, ONCE THROUGH, WRITE ONE REPORT AND YOU MIGHT EVEN HAVE A SHOT AT A TOP UNIVERSITY.

IF HE WAS REALLY A JERK...
NO MATTER WHAT THE REASON WAS,
HE WOULD HAVE JUST IGNORED ME AND WENT ON HIS WAY...
COME TO THINK OF IT...
HE'S JUST...
...REALLY STUBBORN...
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE SO STRANGELY SERIOUS ABOUT CERTAIN THINGS...
MAYBE...
ALTHOUGH IT IS BY CHANCE,
THE FACT THAT HE HAS TO BE KIND TO ME...
...PROBABLY BOTHERS HIM A LOT.
I'VE SEEN THIS EXPRESSION BEFORE...
AND HE SEEMED TROUBLED THAT HE COULDN'T HIDE THEM.
LIKE NOW, HIS REAL EMOTIONS SHOWED ON HIS FACE...
I WONDER WHAT TRIGGERS THAT...
THAT'S RIGHT!
IT WAS WHEN I GAVE HIM THE PRESENT.

...WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOU'RE IRRESPONSIBLE.
IF THE REFERENCE MATERIAL ISN'T THERE...
THE WHOLE CLASS SUFFERS.
THAT MAY BE... BUT...
BUT YOU COULD HAVE IGNORED ME...
...
FEELS REALLY AWKWARD...
HE PROBABLY...
THIS... THIS FACE...

I WONDER WHAT HE THINKS OF ME...?
HOW SHOULD I CARRY THEM...
HE'D PROBABLY JUST GLARE AT ME AGAIN..
WITH THOSE COLD EYES.
THUD
HUH, SERIOUSLY?
YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU?
THAT...
IF YOU BOW YOUR HEAD AND ASK ME NICELY.
MIGHT BE A LITTLE HARSH..

MAYBE...
HE SHOWED SUCH EMOTION BECAUSE...
...HE THOUGHT THE PRESENT WAS FROM ME.
IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN...
MAYBE I'M TOTALLY WRONG, BUT...
IS IT... ME?
NO... IT CAN'T BE...
BUT...
MAYBE HE DOESN'T HATE ME SO MUCH AFTER ALL.
HE PROBABLY WOULDN'T GIVE ME AN ANSWER.
THIS IS THE LAST ONE.
EVEN IF I WANTED...
TO CONFIRM SUCH A THING...
MAYBE HE REEAALLY LIKES YOU, WATARU?
BUT...


IT'S STARTED ALREADY.
...AS A RELIEVER.
HIS FRIEND ON THE TEAM ASKED HIM TO PLAY...
patter patter
OF COURSE! MR. KAZUKI'S IN THE GAME!
THE BASKETBALL TEAM IS PLAYING KAISEI HIGH IN A PRACTICE GAME.
ALL THIS FUSS OVER A PRACTICE GAME?

SERIOUSLY?
I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LIKE KAZUKI?
SO THAT'S IT.
WHAT DO YOU WANNA DO? WANNA SWING BY THE GYM?
WELL... YEAH...
HE IS MY RIVAL IN LOVE...

BUT WATARU... YOU LOOK LIKE YOU WANT TO GO.

I GUESS...
I'M STARVING.
WANNA GRAB SOMETHING BEFORE WE GO HOME?

EEEK!
HURRY! HURRY!
STOMP
STOMP
WAAIT!
STOMP

HEYYYY,
WHAT'S UP?
STOMP
SQUEAL
STOMP

WHAT?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
ALL THE GIRLS...

OOH, HE WEAVED THROUGH.
WHIP
BAM
SWISH
RAAAAH!

BAM
BAM
LOOK AT THIS CROWD...
RAAAAH
YAAAY!
YAAAY
KAISEI
OOH HEY!
WE'RE WINNING!
...FOR A CHANGE.
SQK
THERE'S KAZUKI.

I HATE TO SAY IT BUT... I ADMIT... HE'S COOL.
NOW I KNOW WHY WE'RE WINNING FOR A CHANGE.
MOST OF OUR POINTS WERE SCORED BY KAZUKI ALONE.
IT'S TRUE...
IF IT WERE ENOUGH JUST TO LOOK AT HIM, IT WOULD BE GREAT...

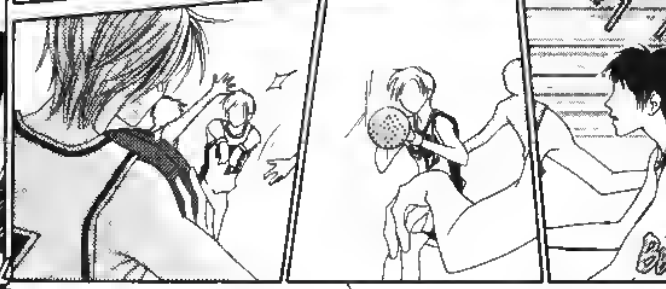
WHAT DID I...
...COME HERE FOR..?
I WONDER..
THAT I WANTED TO COME SEE HIM.
THIS IS JUST PROVING KAWAMURA'S HUNCH..

RYOKUYO
JEEZ, THIS TIME HE MADE A THREE-POINTER!
HE JUST KEEPS ON SCORING.
YEEAAH!

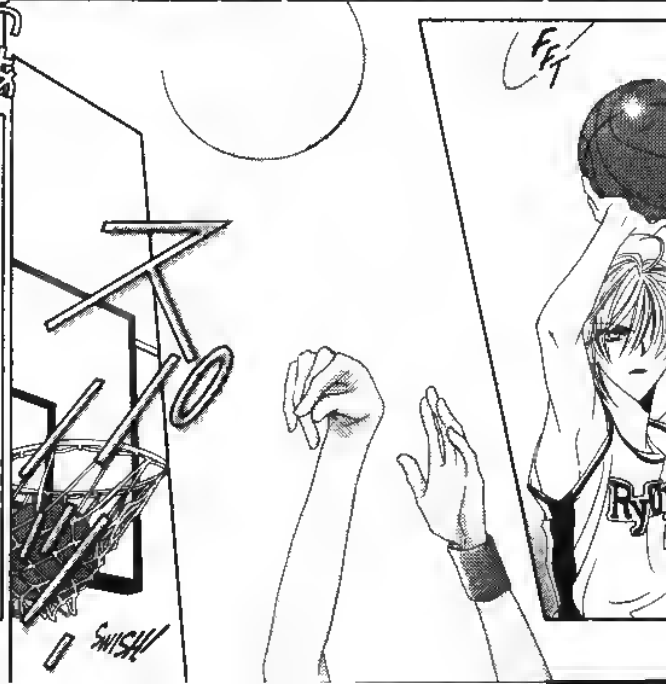
DAMN!
FORGET RELIEVER... HE PLAYS LIKE A PRO!

YAAY
HE SCORED AGAIN! HE'S GREAT! HE'S GREAT!

SWAPP
FLIK



DID YOU SEE THAT PASS?
YEAH, YEAH, HE'S SOOO COOL!
RAAHHH!!


FFT
SWISH!

TO HAVE HIM THINK I CAME TO CHEER HIM ON...
...ANNOYS ME A LITTLE.
RUAHHHH
WITH THAT ARROGANT LOOK ON HIS FACE.
HE'LL PROBABLY JUST PROVOKE ME AGAIN...
68 41
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...
I GUESS PEOPLE LIKE HIM DO EXIST.
GRUMBLE
DOESN'T HE SEEM... TOO PERFECT?
SO WHY DOES HE TAKE SUCH A HOSTILE ATTITUDE ONLY TOWARDS ME?
THAT KAZUKI ON THE COURT...
IS PROBABLY THE "YUICHI KAZUKI" EVERYONE KNOWS.
I STILL HAVEN'T FIGURED IT OUT.

HMM?
FLIT...
LOOK...
RYOKUYO 7
NOW THEY'VE GOT THREE GUARDS ON HIM!
HEY WATARU, DID YOU SEE THAT?
HUH? ...WHAT?
KAZUKI SPOTTED YOU.
SERIOUSLY...?
HE GLANCED OVER AND GAVE A LITTLE SMILE.
AND DURING THE GAME! MAN, HE'S CONFIDENT.

WHOOAA
WHA... HE'S LEAVING THE COURT.
HUH? WHAT HAPPENED?
KAZUKI'S RAISING HIS HAND.
SWEET!
MURMUR
INJURED...?
MURMUR
WHAT? DID HE GET INJURED OR SOMETHING?
HE WEARS A PRETTY CALM EXPRESSION FOR SOMEONE WHO'S HURT...
BUT HE DIDN'T...
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
OOOH... BUT WE'RE JUST ABOUT TO WIN...
SHOULD WE JUST WATCH IT THROUGH?
HEY, MR. KAZUKI GOT REPLACED!
WHAAT? WHHYY?
NOOO!!!

SWISH!
ALL RIGHT! ANOTHER BASKET!
FIVE MINUTES LEFT, THIS GAME'S IN THE BAG!
GETTING INTO IT.
OUR FIRST WIN IN HOW MANY YEARS?!
THAT KAZUKI IS SERIOUSLY BAD!
YEAAAAH
KAISEI
86
55
WHICH IS THE REAL..
...YUICHI KAZUKI...?
BUT NOW AT THIS DISTANCE...
YESTERDAY IN THE LIBRARY,
I FELT AS IF I HAD GLIMPSED HIS TRUE NATURE...
I'M UNCERTAIN AGAIN.
THE KIND, THOUGHTFUL AND SERIOUS STUDENT...
THE MEAN, HAUGHTY, ILL-TEMPERED PUNK...
HE NEVER EVER SHOWS HIS TRUE COLORS...

UH...
HUFF
THUMP
NO... WHY ISN'T HE HERE?
HE JUST LEFT.
HE...
WHAT...
WHERE DID YOU GO..?
HUFF
KAZUKI...!

DON'T YOU THINK, WATARU?
TO HAVE COME THIS FAR AND SUDDENLY BE REPLACED..
SOMETHING DEFINITELY HAPPENED.
CHK
HE.. WHAT IF HE..
SORRY KAWAMURA, I'VE GOT TO GO...!
HUH?! HEY, WATARU!

Ring. 2 END

その指だけが知っている

Ring.③

I KNEW YOU WOULD RUN AFTER ME.
HUH...?
I WAS RIGHT.
TAP...
YOU CAME RUSHING OUT, DIDN'T YOU?
WILL HE GLARE AT ME HARSHLY...
...LIKE ALWAYS?
WHAT A FOOL.
KA...
YOU'RE MISSING A HISTORIC MOMENT.
THIS WILL BE THE FIRST WIN FOR THE RYOKUYO TEAM SINCE FOREVER.

SHK
SHK
KAZUKI...?
I THOUGHT I DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIM.
THAT'S SIR KAZUKI TO YOU.
BUT...
I RAN AFTER HIM INSTINCTIVELY.
IF I TURN AND LOOK NOW...

THE GAME SHOULD BE OVER SOON.
...
THEY'RE WINNING BECAUSE OF YOU.
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO INCONSIDERATE?
I BET THE TEAM WANTS YOU TO PLAY THROUGH TILL THE END.
WHAT?
THE GAME.
YOU DON'T FOOL ME...
YOU WERE PLANNING TO LEAVE BEFORE THE END ALL ALONG.

OH...
YOUR SHOE-LACE...
IT'S UNTIED.
KAZUKI...
ARGH...
IT'S SO OBVIOUS THAT I CAME RACING AFTER HIM...
スッ
SIT

THE CONTRAST FITS YOUR PERSONALITY TO A "T".
SMALL BODY, CLUNKY HI-TOPS...
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
THAT YOU'RE ROUGH AND UNREFINED.
THOSE ARE COOL.
HUH?
FROM THE CHEERS,
I'D SAY WE WON.
STAND
YEAH...
MRRGH
AND THAT IS A MOST PREDICTABLE RESPONSE.
HA HA
AM I BEING MOCKED AGAIN...?
IT WOULD'VE BEEN ANNOYING...
IF I'D STAYED BEHIND.
YOU GONNA TRY 'N SHRUG IT OFF LIKE THAT?
I GOT BORED...
THAT'S NOT...
NO, NO,
I MEANT ME, I'D BE ANNOYED.
....
RyOK
YEEAAAAHHHH!
IT'S OVER.
YAAAYY...

WHAT? THE RING? I TOOK IT OFF FOR THE GAME.
HUH...
TOO BAD FOR YOU I DIDN'T LOSE IT, HUH?
.....
FLICK
STARE
ANYWAY, I'M NOT THAT STUPID THAT I'D LOSE IT AGAIN.
MAN, YOU'RE EASY TO READ.
BEFORE?
YEAH...
ABOUT ONE OR TWO MONTHS AFTER I BOUGHT IT.
HUH?
I'VE LOST IT... ONCE BEFORE.
...SO I'M STUPID.

OH...
HE'S NOT WEARING HIS RING...
I WONDER WHY.
HE MUST JUST CARRY IT AROUND.
OH YEAH, I TALKED WITH KAWAMURA ABOUT IT...
...I'D BETTER GET CHANGED.
WHAT'S HAPPENNING TO ME?
I USED TO HATE HAVING THE SAME THING AS SOMEONE ELSE...
BUT... WHY AM I SAD? AS IF I LOST MY OTHER HALF...
AND NOW I'M SAD?
RYOKUYO 7

I WAS... MOVED.
I WAS SO SURPRISED.
IT WAS LIKE THE RING CAME BACK TO ME ON ITS OWN, AND...
...I SEE.
WHEN I LOOK AT THIS RING, I CAN REMEMBER THAT FEELING...
'CUZ WOULDN'T YOU BE HAPPY IF YOU GOT SOMETHING YOU'D ALREADY GIVEN UP ON?
SINCE THEN, I'VE TREASURED IT.
WAS THAT CHILDISH?
BABBLING
WHAT AM I...?
OOPS?!
...SOMETHING I'D GIVEN UP ON...
YEAH, I GUESS THAT WOULD MAKE ME HAPPY...

UM
...AGAIN
IT WAS AT SCHOOL.
AND?
I TOOK IT OFF TO WASH MY HANDS LIKE LAST TIME... AND LEFT IT THERE.
IT WASN'T THAT EXPENSIVE, SO...
I GAVE UP ON IT PRETTY EASILY.
BUT THEN A WEEK LATER, IT JUST CAME BACK.
ONE MORNING... I CAME TO SCHOOL, AND THERE IT WAS ON MY DESK.
I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW.
YEAH.
CAME BACK?

NO...
SO I PRAY THAT WITH EVERY PASSING DAY, YOU'LL GET TIRED OF YOURS!
AND THE FACT THAT WE HAVE THE SAME DESIGN REALLY GETS ON MY NERVES!
I HAVE MORE OF AN ATTACHMENT TO THIS RING THAN YOU'LL EVER HAVE...
SO OF COURSE I'LL NEVER LOSE IT, EITHER!
J... JUST TO LET YOU KNOW, I'M NEVER TAKING THIS RING OFF AGAIN!
I CAME RUNNING OUT BECAUSE I WAS WORRIED ABOUT HIM...
AND IT JUST MADE ME LOOK LIKE A FOOL!
BUT IN THE END, HE ACTS LIKE IT'S ALL A BIG JOKE!
IT WAS FINALLY GOING WELL...
...!

STOP RANTING AND LISTEN.
I SAID YOU'RE NOT CUTE.
ANYWAY, YOU...
DON'T SAY CUTE!!
IT GIVES ME THE CHILLS...!
©...!
KAZUKI, HOW DARE YOU...
THAT RING LOOKS WAY BETTER ON ME, DOESN'T IT?
IN SPITE OF YOUR LOOKS, YOUR ATTITUDE'S NOT CUTE AT ALL.
THAT'S "SIR" TO YOU, WATARU.
WHAT..?
BUT IF YOU ASK ME...
IT'S TOO BAD FOR YOU
THAT WE HAVE THE SAME DESIGN!

Tug!
KAZUKI...!
WHAT...!
BA-BUMP!
W... WHAT...
ARE YOU MAD...?
YOU...
...JUST WON'T SHUT UP.

NO.
THIS IS NOT WHAT I WANT TO SAY...
BUT IF I DON'T ACT THIS WAY,
KAZUKI MIGHT FIND OUT...
....
RAAHH
YAAY, WE WON!
THE CROWD'S PILING OUT...
WELL... I'M LEAVING NOW.
...THAT I FELT LIKE HIS RING WAS MINE'S OTHER HALF...
OKUYAMA

WHA...
WHAT WAS THAT...?
STUPEFIED
...SERVES YOU RIGHT.
HAAH!

AND ALSO BECAUSE...
I'M THE OWNER OF IT...?
AND THE FACT THAT WE HAVE THE SAME DESIGN REALLY GETS ON MY NERVES!
WHY...
MAYBE...
HE FEELS THAT WAY TOO.
WOULD HE DO THAT...
MAYBE...
"HE REEAALLY HATES YOU, WATARU!"

HE KISSED...
THAT JERK...!
HE'S JUST MAKING FUN OF ME!
MY RING...!
HUH?
WHERE'D HE GO?
DAMN! IT'S ALWAYS LIKE THIS!
HE SAYS WHAT HE WANTS TO SAY, DOES WHAT HE WANTS TO DO...
LEAVES ME RILED AND DISAPPEARS...!
WHAT DOES HE MEAN, "SERVES YOU RIGHT"?

I'M NOT REALLY...
THIS WAS KAWA-MURA'S IDEA.
NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY,
AND PEOPLE USUALLY TEND TO THINK THE WORST...
WHA...
UM... HEY...
HEY, HEY...
IT GOT TO ME.
DON'T CRY...
OK...?
IT'S THE FIRST TIME A GIRL CRIED ON ME...
...I'VE HAD IT.

UM...
THE RUMOR THAT YOUR SISTER IS SEEING MR. KAZUKI...
...IS IT TRUE...?
AGAIN...
SO THIS GIRL LIKES KAZUKI TOO...
SHE'S A FRESH-MAN...
I NEVER THOUGHT...
...KAWAMURA'S PLOT WOULD GO THIS WELL.
THE STORY THAT "KAZUKI CAME TO ASK ABOUT FUJII'S SISTER'S SCHOOL" BECAME...
..."KAZUKI IS DATING FUJII'S SISTER"
ALL TOO EASILY.
THANKS TO IT ALL, I GET CALLED OUT LIKE THIS ON A DAILY BASIS.
THOSE TWO...
I DON'T REALLY KNOW...

UMM... IT'S JUST MY HUNCH...
BUT COULD IT BE THAT YOU DON'T LIKE THE RUMORS ABOUT KAZUKI AND KARIN?
'CUZ SHE'S YOUR SISTER 'N ALL.
WH...
WHY WOULD I...?!
'CUZ YOU LOOK SO GRUMPY ALL THE TIME.
....
....
WATARU...?
I DON'T THINK SO.
I THINK HE'S JUST HAVING FUN BECAUSE YOU TAKE THE BAIT SO EASILY.
THAT JERK KAZUKI'S JUST TAUNTING ME.
AND I DON'T THINK ANYBODY ELSE KNOWS ABOUT THIS CHILDISH SIDE OF KAZUKI.
I MEAN, I HAVEN'T EVEN SEEN IT FOR MYSELF,
SO IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE.
カリカリ
bam!
HUH? HEY...
I ALWAYS LOOK THIS WAY!
.....
.....
I DIDN'T REALLY ACCEPT IT BEFORE, BUT...
THAT KAZUKI REALLY IS POPULAR.
HE'S GAINED EVEN MORE FANS SINCE THE BASKETBALL GAME.
THERE, THERE...
ON THE OTHER HAND, ANY RUMORS ABOUT YOUR RING HAVE DISAPPEARED.
I'VE BECOME THE ENEMY OF THE ENTIRE SCHOOL'S FEMALE POPULATION...
YOU SURPRISED ME, MAN.
YEAH, YEAH, AND YOU WENT CHASING AFTER HIM, WATARU.
...BUT HE LEFT MID-GAME.
HE PROBABLY JUST BAITED YOU AGAIN, RIGHT?
HONESTLY, LISTENING TO YOUR STORIES, YOU GUYS ARE LIKE TWO LITTLE KIDS.
...WHAT?
ウーウー
SO WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR HIS RETIRING?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW!
むすっ

OF COURSE NOT...
KAZUKI AND I ARE BOTH GUYS...
SOMEONE AS POPULAR AS KAZUKI,
HAS NO REASON TO TURN TO ANOTHER MAN...
...FOR A PARTNER...
EVEN THOUGH WE WEAR THE SAME RINGS,
BEHIND ME, EVERYONE SEES KARIN'S SHADOW.
TO THEM, I'M JUST A "FRIEND OF THE KID SISTER'S BOYFRIEND..."
FOR THOSE IN LOVE WITH KAZUKI, KARIN'S EXISTENCE IS DETESTABLE...
BUT THEY DON'T SEE ME AS A THREAT AT ALL...

I'M LEAVING.
GRAB
WHAT ABOUT CLASS...?!
WHAT THE...?!
I FEEL LIKE A FOOL...
I CUT CLASS BUT...
I DON'T FEEL LIKE GOING HOME...
Guess I'll just waste some time...
IT'S NOT EVEN TRUE THAT KARIN AND KAZUKI ARE DATING.
IT'S JUST A STORY THAT KAWAMURA AND I MADE UP TO USE TO OUR ADVANTAGE.
BUT...
THE MORE I BEGIN TO BELIEVE IT MYSELF...
THE MORE I FOSTER THIS LIE,

IT'S BEEN LESS THAN TWO WEEKS SINCE WE FIRST STARTED TALKING...
AND YET, I FEEL LIKE WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE WE WERE LITTLE...
AND HE FEELS SPECIAL TO ME SOMEHOW.
THERE... REALLY IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME.
IF KAZUKI WERE TO WALK HERE THROUGH A RAIN OF CHERRY BLOSSOMS...
I BET IT WOULD BE PICTURE-PERFECT.
THAT'S RIGHT...
TOMORROW... SUNDAY'S SUPPOSED TO BE HIS BIRTHDAY.
...
...
OH YEAH, BUT BY SPRING OF NEXT YEAR, HE'LL BE GRADUATING...

THAT TIME...
IT'S TRUE THAT I FELT FLUSHED...
...THINKING OF HIM AS A SUBJECT FOR ROMANCE...
THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME.
SCRUNCH
BUT THAT'S NOT PROOF THAT I'M IN LOVE WITH HIM...
WHUSSH...
GREENERY IS SO CALMING...
IN SPRING,
THESE CHERRY BLOSSOMS BLOOM AND IT'S BEAUTIFUL HERE.

HE SAID, "YOU'RE MISS KARIN OF FIRST YEAR, RIGHT?"
HA HA
TODAY...
MR. KAZUKI CAME DOWN TO MY SCHOOL!
PANG
FOLLOW UP...?
ABOUT WHAT?
KAZUKI...? AT YOUR SCHOOL...?
THAT'S RIGHT.. I TOTALLY FORGOT..
HE CAME TO ASK ABOUT KARIN'S SCHOOL...
I THINK HE WAITED BY THE SCHOOL GATE UNTIL I CAME OUT... ♡
MY HEART ACHES..
KARIN HAS NO IDEA..
...THAT AT MY SCHOOL, SHE'S KNOWN AS KAZUKI'S LOVE INTEREST..
I SEE.
I FINALLY GET IT.
THE PERSON WHO MOST RESENTED THE RUMOR ABOUT KAZUKI AND KARIN... WAS ME.
HE MUST'VE CUT FOURTH PERIOD, OTHERWISE...
THERE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN SUCH GOOD TIMING.
I'M SO ♥ MOVED.

OH, THERE'S ONIONS IN IT, BUT...
...I'LL TAKE OUT THE ONES IN YOUR PORTION, OK?
IN A GOOD MOOD?
OK...
I'M LATE.
I'M HOME...
CLIK
CLICK
OHHH HEY, THANK YOU, WATARU.
HUH?
YOU FOLLOWED UP ON THAT BUSINESS WITH MR. KAZUKI FOR ME, RIGHT?
TONIGHT,
IT'S WATARU'S FAVORITE! ♡
CHILLED PASTA WITH CLAMS AND MINESTRONE.
WELCOME HOME, WATARU! ♪
I'M MAKING DINNER NOW.

NG...
IT'S LIKE YOU'RE JEALOUS...
I'M TALKING ABOUT THE OUTCOME!
IS KAZUKI GONNA GO OUT WITH HER?
OR...
YEAH, THAT'S JEALOUSY.
YOU'RE JEALOUS, AREN'T YOU, WATARU?
WH... WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HEY WATARU...
ISN'T THAT... KIND OF STRANGE?
I KNEW IT!
OHHHHH...
WH... WH... WH...
K... KARIN?
...KNEW ...IT?
HA HA HA
SO I PUT YOU IN A PAINFUL POSITION, HUH?
HEY...
SORRY, SORRY!

...THEN IT WAS ABOUT THE GIFT?
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW ARROGANT HE WAS ABOUT IT.
HE TOLD ME TO TAKE IT BACK BECAUSE IT WAS BULKY.
HE SAID ME AND WATARU LOOKED SO ALIKE, HE KNEW RIGHT AWAY
MR. KAZUKI CAME ALL THAT WAY TO APOLOGIZE TO MY FRIEND.
HE... HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT I WENT THROUGH TO..!
DAMN! WHAT'S UP WITH HIM?!
THE PRESENT?!
YEAH... HE SAID HE WAS FEELING UNWELL THAT DAY.
BAM!
H... HEY, CALM DOWN, WATARU.
YOU SCARED ME.
HE APOLOGIZED ABOUT THE PRESENT BUT NOT TO ME?!
BUT HE SAID HE WAS SORRY HE TOOK IT OUT ON THE PRESENT AND...
...HE APOLOGIZED.
GO? WHAT?
HUH?
AND...? SO HOW DID IT GO?

WATARU?
WATARU, ARE YOU OK?
I'M...?
"ARE YOU...
...IN LOVE WITH ME?"
"ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH ME?"

YOU'RE SO EASY TO READ!
OR HAVE YOU ALREADY CONFESSED?
AT THIS RATE, IT MUST ALL BE CLEAR TO MR. KAZUKI BY NOW.
giggle
DOWN BOY, DON'T GET EXCITED.
FEELINGS. WHAT FEELINGS...?!
F..!
ACTUALLY, I WAS A BIT SUSPICIOUS.
I THOUGHT MAYBE YOUR OWN FEELINGS WERE GETTING IN THE WAY OF DELIVERING THAT PRESENT.
WHA...
THINK RATIONALLY!
OF... OF... OF COURSE NOT! HE'S A GUY!
"JEALOUS...?"
"YOU.."
I... I'M..
HE... DECLINED...
MR. KAZUKI POLITELY DECLINED, AS USUAL, ON THE SPOT.
THERE, DO YOU FEEL BETTER NOW?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HAS TO BE RATIONAL, WATARU!
OOOOH

EVEN BEFORE EARNING KAZUKI'S LOVE,
OR FINDING OUT IF OUR FEELINGS ARE MUTUAL...
IT'S RIGHT THERE IF I CUT THROUGH THIS PARK.
I WANT TO KNOW MY OWN TRUE FEELINGS FIRST.
AT ANY RATE...
...THIS FOG MIGHT LIFT.
IF I COULD MEET HIM AND BE CERTAIN... ALTHOUGH I STILL DON'T KNOW...
...WHAT I'LL DO AFTER THAT...
TO BE HONEST, I DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND MY OWN FEELINGS YET.
I WANT TO SEE KAZUKI AND TALK TO HIM.
SO IT'S NOT THAT FAR FROM MY HOUSE...
I NEVER EVEN IMAGINED THAT I WOULD FALL IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER MAN.
LET'S SEE... FIFTH STREET.
WHEN I WAS WITH NANO,
MY HEART WAS FILLED WITH CALM.
AND I THOUGHT THAT WAS LOVE.
BUT...
AS TIME WENT ON, I STARTED TO FEEL OUT OF PLACE WITH THIS CALM.
WHEN I'M DEALING WITH KAZUKI, IT DOESN'T GO THAT WAY AT ALL.
BEING NERVOUS HAS MADE ME THIRSTY...
I NEED WATER.
AND THERE'S STILL A PART OF ME...
...THAT DOESN'T WANT TO ACCEPT IT.
APPARENTLY, HE'S SPENDING HIS BIRTHDAY AT *HIS FAMILY'S HOUSE.
I GUESS IT'S THEIR ANNUAL CUSTOM.
THEIR RELATIVES COME AND IT'S A BIG FUSS.
IF I COULD JUST SEE KAZUKI'S FACE...
HIGH SOCIETY

AND HOW IS IT? IS THE RING OKAY?
YEAH, GREAT.
BUT IF THEY'RE NOT SIBLINGS, THEN WHAT...?
SEE, I'M EVEN WEARING IT NOW.
THEY SEEM REALLY CLOSE...
STOP TALKING AND GO...
IT LOOKS LIKE SHE CAME JUST FOR HIS BIRTHDAY...
AND KAZUKI WENT TO MEET HER.
DAD WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE YOU.
SHE'S PRETTY... BUT KARIN TOLD ME THAT KAZUKI DOESN'T HAVE ANY SISTERS...
IT'S BEEN AWHILE SINCE YOU'VE COME TO THE HOUSE.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
AFTER ALL,
IT'S MY FAVORITE GUY'S SPECIAL DAY.
THERE WAS A LITTLE INCIDENT AND I EVEN STARTED WEARING IT AT SCHOOL.
THANKS TO THAT, MY HAND'S COMPLETELY USED TO IT NOW. LOOKS GOOD, HUH?

IT'S MUCH QUICKER IF WE CUT THROUGH HERE.
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU COME OVER, YOU STILL FORGET.
NO, NO, TOUKO...
ANGER...
SURPRISE...
IT'S AN EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER...
WHY...? HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE AT HOME CELEBRATING WITH HIS FAMILY...
AND WHO'S THAT WOMAN WITH HIM...?
SHE'S AT LEAST THREE OR FOUR YEARS OLDER...
K... KAZUKI...!
I KNOW.
OK, OK.
HIDES INSTINCTIVELY
WELL EXCUSE ME!
AND NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I COME OVER, YOU'RE STILL RUDE, YUICHI.

"FROM MY DEAR MISS TOUKO"...
SO SHE WAS THE ONE WHO GAVE IT TO HIM...
I SEE...
KAZUKI...
THAT TIME...
I YELLED THAT IT GOT ON MY NERVES...
L...
...BECAUSE WE HAD THE SAME RINGS...
"THIS RING IS PRECIOUS TO ME."
CLENCH
WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE TREATING IT WELL.
OF COURSE, I TREASURE IT.
AFTER ALL...
IT WAS A PRESENT FROM MY DEAR MISS TOUKO.
HA HA HA
WELL, I PUT ALL MY LOVE INTO IT, YOU KNOW. ♥

PURU IS TAKAKO'S DOG.
OH, DO YOU WANNA COME DOWN?
MOM AND DAD AND PURU AND TAKAKO, WE CAME BY CAR...
...TO GRAMPA'S.
UM M.
HOME? IS IT NEAR?
YEAH, REAL CLOSE.
WHO ARE YOU?
LIKE THIS.
IT'S CALLED A "MINIATURE LONGHAIR DACHSHUND," DO YOU KNOW IT?
OH.. YEAH.
...I'LL GIVE YOU... THIS.
I KNOW. AS A REWARD...
TAKAKO IS SMART.
WOW, YOU REMEMBERED A LONG NAME... GOOD GIRL.
PAT
UMPH.
WATCH OU...
THAT'S WHAT I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU...
BUT...
BUT IN REALITY, I WAS HAPPY THAT WE DID.
THANK YOU.
ME? I'M... GOING HOME.
MISTER, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

THERE IS ONLY THE BITTER TASTE OF SILVER WHERE THE RING USED TO BE.
JUST LIKE THE END OF THIS FEELING...
I GUESS PARTINGS ARE ALWAYS THIS ANTI-CLIMACTIC...
SO I'LL PROBABLY NEVER SEE HER AGAIN.
SHE SAID SHE CAME BY CAR.

MMPH
THIS RING IS TOO BIG!
THAT'S OKAY.
ARE YOU GOING TO MARRY TAKAKO?
IS THIS A WEDDING RING?
LET'S DO THAT.
MARRY...?
YEAH... OKAY...
YOU CAN WEAR IT... ...WHEN YOU GROW UP.
SO KEEP IT SAFE 'TIL THEN, OK?
grin
TAP
TAP
TAP

SORRY, BUT I CAN'T DO THAT.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
LET GO!
TUG
W...
WAIT...!
COME WITH ME.

I WANT A WORD WITH YOU.
SHUT UP AND FOLLOW ME.

WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO?
HEY, KAZUKI!

...T
IT STILL HURTS TO SEE YOUR FACE...!
THIS IS SO UNFAIR...!

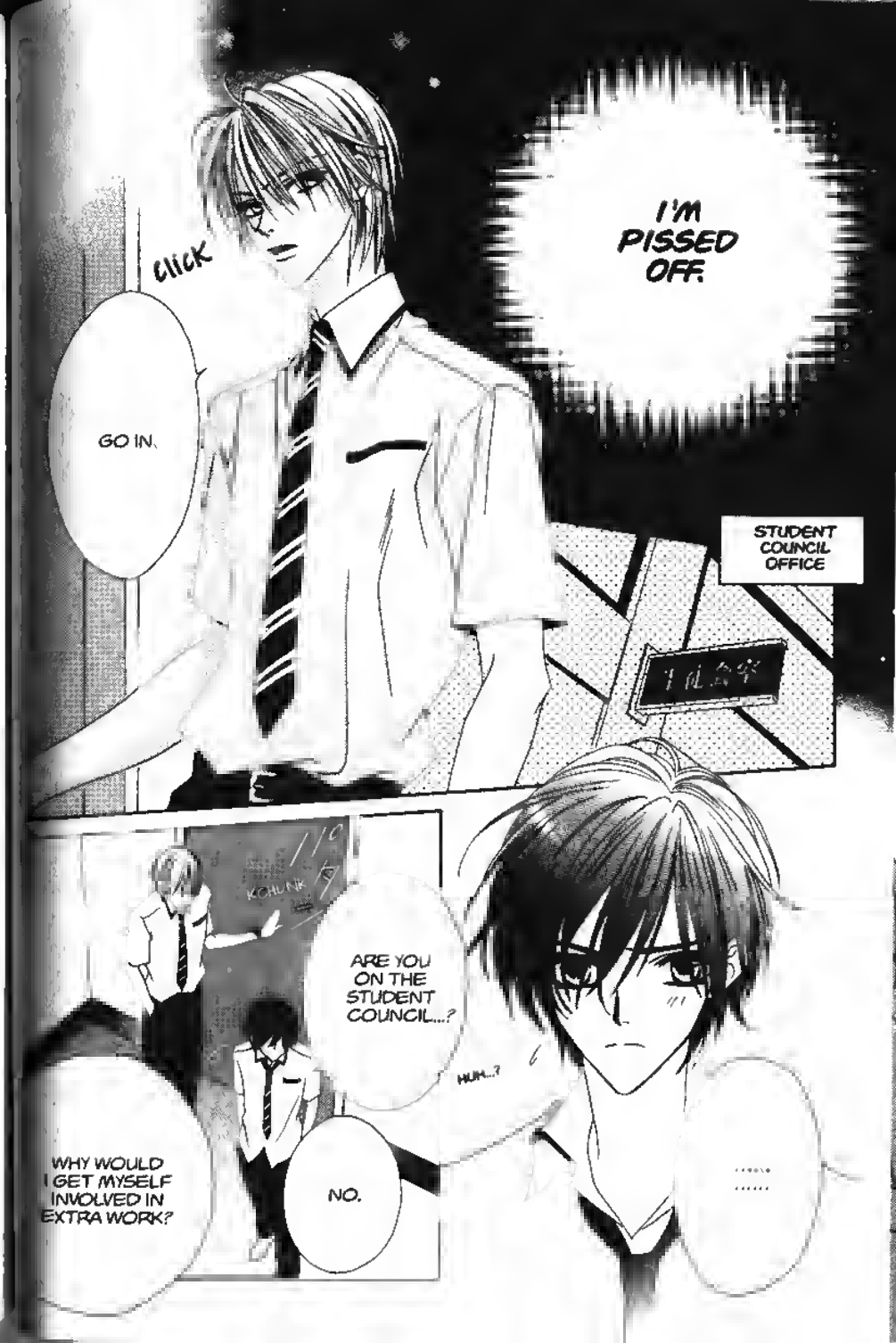
BAM!
IS WATARU FUJII HERE?!
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP

HEY! IF YOU'RE HERE, AT LEAST ANSWER.
grab
.....?
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
WHA...!

その指だけが知っている
Ring. 4
SKY BLUE

I'M PISSED OFF...
SO I'LL SAY THIS AHEAD OF TIME.
I...
MIGHT DO SOMETHING AWFUL TO YOU.
Ring. 3 END

...SIT DOWN.
THUNK
I REMEMBER THE STORY NOW...
YOU GOT THE MOST VOTES BUT THEY WERE ALL CONSIDERED INVALID.
OF COURSE THEY WERE, I WASN'T EVEN RUNNING.
THE PRESIDENT'S A FRIEND OF MINE.
THE RING.....
IT PAINS ME TO EVEN LOOK AT IT..
HE LETS ME HAVE A SPARE KEY.
THEY LOOKED SO CLOSE...
LAST WEEKEND...
THREE DAYS AGO, I SAW KAZUKI AND THAT WOMAN...
SINCE THEN, I'VE BEEN TRYING SO HARD TO AVOID HIM...


I'M PISSED OFF.
CLICK
GO IN.
STUDENT COUNCIL OFFICE
KOKUNK
ARE YOU ON THE STUDENT COUNCIL...?
HUM..?
NO.
WHY WOULD I GET MYSELF INVOLVED IN EXTRA WORK?
.....
.....

SO WHY AM I HERE NOW? CUTTING CLASS TO BE ALONE WITH HIM...
SO TELL ME.
DON'T PLAY DUMB.
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.
SO...
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SAY?
WHEN EXACTLY...
DID I START DATING YOUR SISTER?
HMM?
OH...
TH... THAT'S...
BECAUSE OF THAT, I JUST HAD THE WORST BIRTHDAY EVER.
ALL THANKS TO YOU.
THE WORST...?
UM... DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
BUT ONE GIRL DID TELL ME.
I ASKED HER BROTHER IF THE RUMOR WAS TRUE AND HE DIDN'T DENY IT.
...SHE SAID.
IT DOESN'T CONCERN YOU.
...
...
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL THE TRUTH WHEN THEY ASKED YOU?
GH...!
YOU SPREAD THAT RUMOR, DIDN'T YOU?
...
...
I'M SORRY.
YOU...
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO FORCE ME AND YOUR SISTER TOGETHER SO BADLY?

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO ARGUE WITH YOU!
SHUT UP!
WELL, YOU SEEM LIVELY ENOUGH.
JERK! PERVERT! SCHIZO!
S... STOP IT...
LET GO!
I'VE HAD NOTHING BUT BAD LUCK EVER SINCE I SWITCHED RINGS WITH YOU!
YOU JERK!
YOU'D GO THAT FAR...?
I SAW YOU LOOKING SO HAPPY WITH THAT OLDER WOMAN...
...WHAT HAPPENED ON YOUR BIRTHDAY?
BANG
WHAT ARE YOU, A LITTLE KID? STOP GRIPING ABOUT IT!
YOU DRAGGED ME HERE JUST TO TELL ME ABOUT YOUR BIRTHDAY?!
I WON'T LET YOU GET AWAY WITH TELLING ME YOU HAD A BAD TIME!

KARIN TOLD ME...
YOU WENT TO HER SCHOOL... YOU EVEN CUT FOURTH PERIOD TO GO...
BUT...
YOU WENT TO SEE HER...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
WHAT?
WHAT HAPPENED ON YOUR BIRTHDAY?
DOES IT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE RUMOR?
IF IT DOES, THEN I...
SCRUNCH
WATARU, YOUR BRAIN MUST BE REALLY PUNY.
I TOLD YOU, IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.
わしゃ RUMPLE
わしゃ RUMPLE

ANYWAY...
NONE OF THAT MATTERS NOW.
BUT IF IT GOT AROUND THAT YOU HAD A GIRL-FRIEND,
THAT'S WHY...
THEN NO ONE WOULD BOTHER WITH RUMORS ABOUT ME...
NONE OF...
...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I GOT RID OF THE RING.
THREW IT AWAY.
...THREW IT AWAY...?

UMM...
I TOLD YOU... THAT WAS...
NEVER MIND THAT.
WHY DID YOU SPREAD THAT RUMOR?
URK
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S ACTING LIKE A LITTLE KID.
...BECAUSE PEOPLE GOT THE WRONG IDEA.
HUH?
I SAID!
STORIES ABOUT US HAVING THE SAME RING, AND MY GIVING YOU A GIFT...
I WAS TIRED OF PEOPLE MISUNDER-STANDING!

THIS WAS PROBABLY MY FIRST...
LET ME SEE YOUR HAND.
"REAL..."
IT'S PATHETIC THAT IT TOOK A BROKEN HEART FOR ME TO ADMIT IT...
BUT...
ALL I KNOW IS...
...THAT I LOVE KAZUKI.
AREN'T YOU GLAD? NOW THAT MY RING'S GONE...
...THAT ONE IS YOURS ALONE.
NO.
YOUR RIGHT HAND, LET ME SEE IT.
SHOW ME!

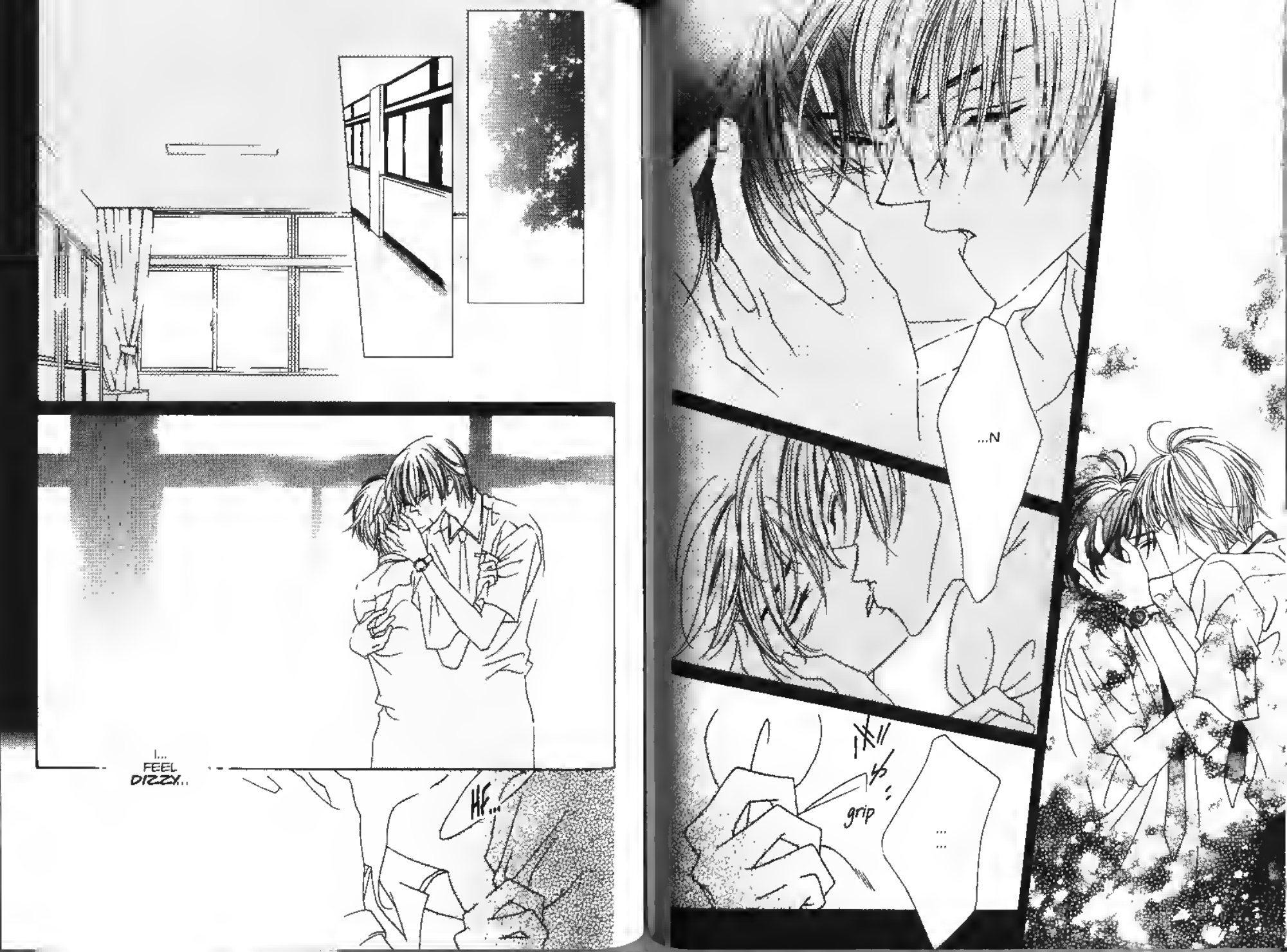
IT'S OKAY.
I MEAN, MINE WAS SOMETHING I BOUGHT AT RANDOM...
BUT KAZUKI, YOURS IS DIFFERENT.
WHAT AM I TRYING TO SAY...?
YOURS IS SPECIAL.
I DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND MYSELF...
YEAH.
SO NOW, I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANY MORE GOSSIP...
AND I DON'T NEED TO RELY ON ANY RUMOR TO HELP ME OUT EITHER.
YOU THREW IT... WHAT ARE YOU SAYING...
ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?
IT'S THE PRECIOUS RING YOU GOT FROM YOUR LOVER, RIGHT?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE ANNOYED ANYMORE EITHER.
I'M SURE IT REALLY BOTHERED YOU THAT IT HAD THE SAME DESIGN AS MINE.
WATARU...

BUT NO AMOUNT OF WORDS CAN GRANT ME KAZUKI'S HEART.
THE KAZUKI I LOVE IS STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME...
WHY IS IT THAT THE MORE REAL THE FEELINGS ARE...
THAT ISN'T IT...
THE HARDER IT IS TO EXPRESS THEM...?
YOUR RING AND MINE... THEY'RE NOT THE SAME.
THEY'RE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT. I UNDERSTOOD IT THEN..
BUT WHEN I FOUND OUT...
...IT PAINED ME TO WEAR MY OWN RING, SO...
FOUND OUT?
FOUND WHAT OUT?
YOUR TRUE FEELINGS...
YOU...

I DON'T BELIEVE IT...
BUT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GET RID OF IT!
NO, I... IT WAS ME...
I DIDN'T LIKE IT.
NO, THAT'S NOT IT!
YOU IDIOT...
WHY WOULD YOU THROW IT AWAY...
WHEN DID I EVER SAY THAT IT ANNOYED ME TO SHARE RINGS WITH YOU?
KAZUKI...

WATARU... YOU'RE AN IDIOT...
I'M NOT LOOKING AT YOU...?
KAZUKI...
I...?

HA!
THAT YOU'RE NOT LOOKING...
...AT ME.
WHA...
NO...
TUG...!


I...
FEEL
DIZZY...
HF...
...N
grip
...
...

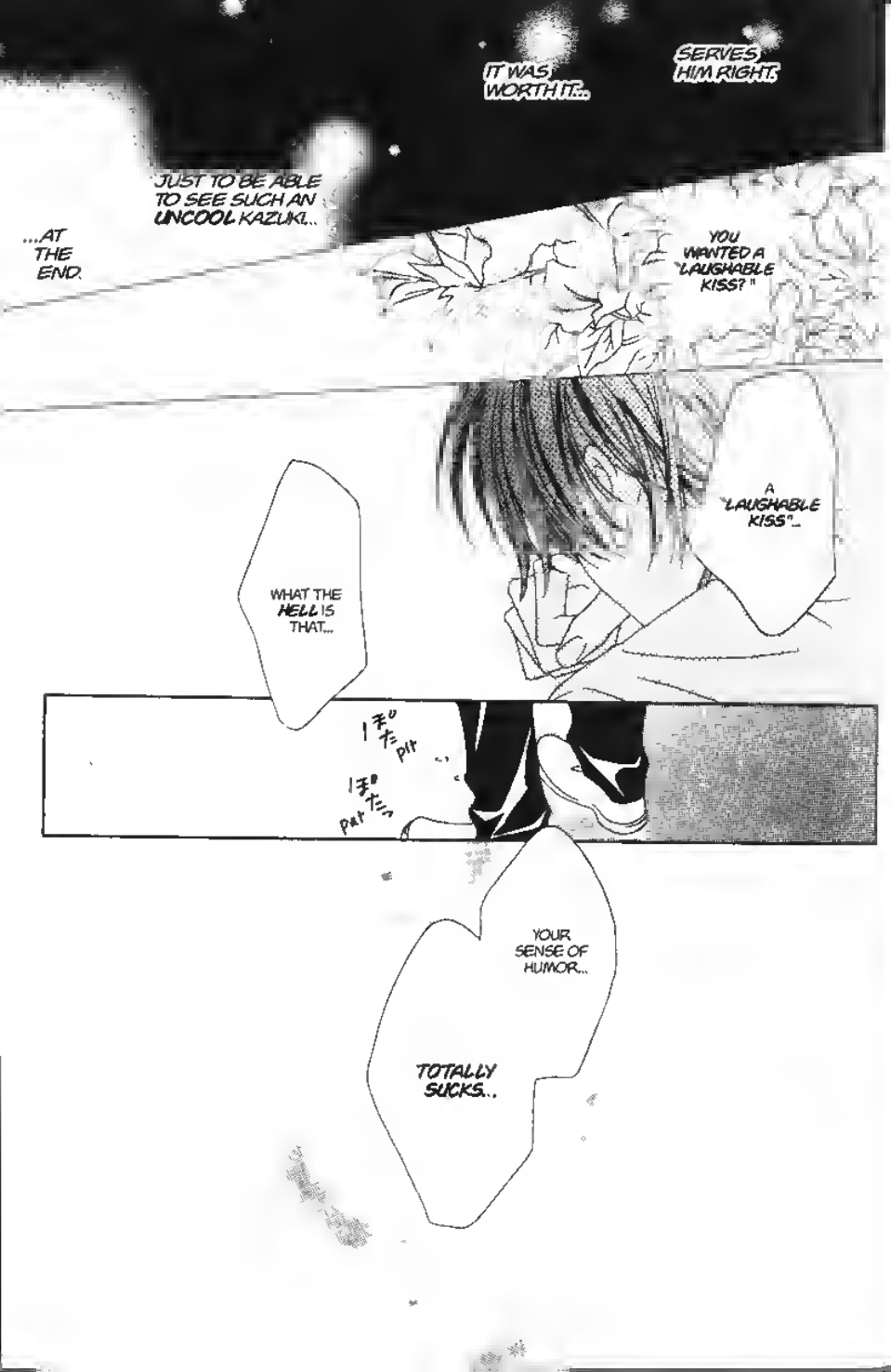
はあ、
HUFF...
...
...
YOU BASTARD!
THEN WHAT...?
THIS IS A BAD JOKE...
AND I'M NOT LAUGHING!
YOU WANTED A LAUGHABLE KISS?
HIS TOUCH...
WHAT'S HAPPENING...
WHAT...
THE FINGERS FEEL HOT.
THE PLEASURABLE FEEL OF HIS FINGERS...
...AND ALSO...
WHAM!
THE RING...!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING...?!
はっ
HA
...?
SOMETHING...
"HARD..."

MAYBE...
EVEN IF IT'S A MILLION TO ONE CHANCE...
NO... THERE'S NO WAY...
KAZUKI...
I APOLOGIZE ABOUT THE RUMOR...
I'M SORRY.
AND ABOUT KARIN...
IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW.
WHAT? YOU WANT TO ARRANGE A MARRIAGE BETWEEN US OR SOMETHING?
IT DOES MATTER!
N... NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT...
I'LL TELL EVERYONE MYSELF THAT IT WAS ALL A LIE.
WOULD HE TAKE MY HAND...?

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT!
YOU HURT ME, YOU JERK!
THAT RING YOU KEEP CLOSE TO YOU AT ALL TIMES...
PERVERT!
YOU LOVE THAT RING BECAUSE YOU GOT IT FROM HER...
BUT MAYBE...
JUST MAYBE...
IF I REACHED OUT TO HIM NOW...
HUFF
HUFF
...

SOUNDS LIKE IT WOULD BE FUN.
ON TOP OF THAT, THE FACT THAT SHE LOOKS LIKE YOU...
I'M SERIOUS.
SHE'S PRETTY CUTE...
AND I LIKE 'EM STUBBORN.
W...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
F... FUN...?
TO CONTINUE THIS LOVE SCENARIO...
...WITH YOUR LITTLE SISTER.
SLAP!

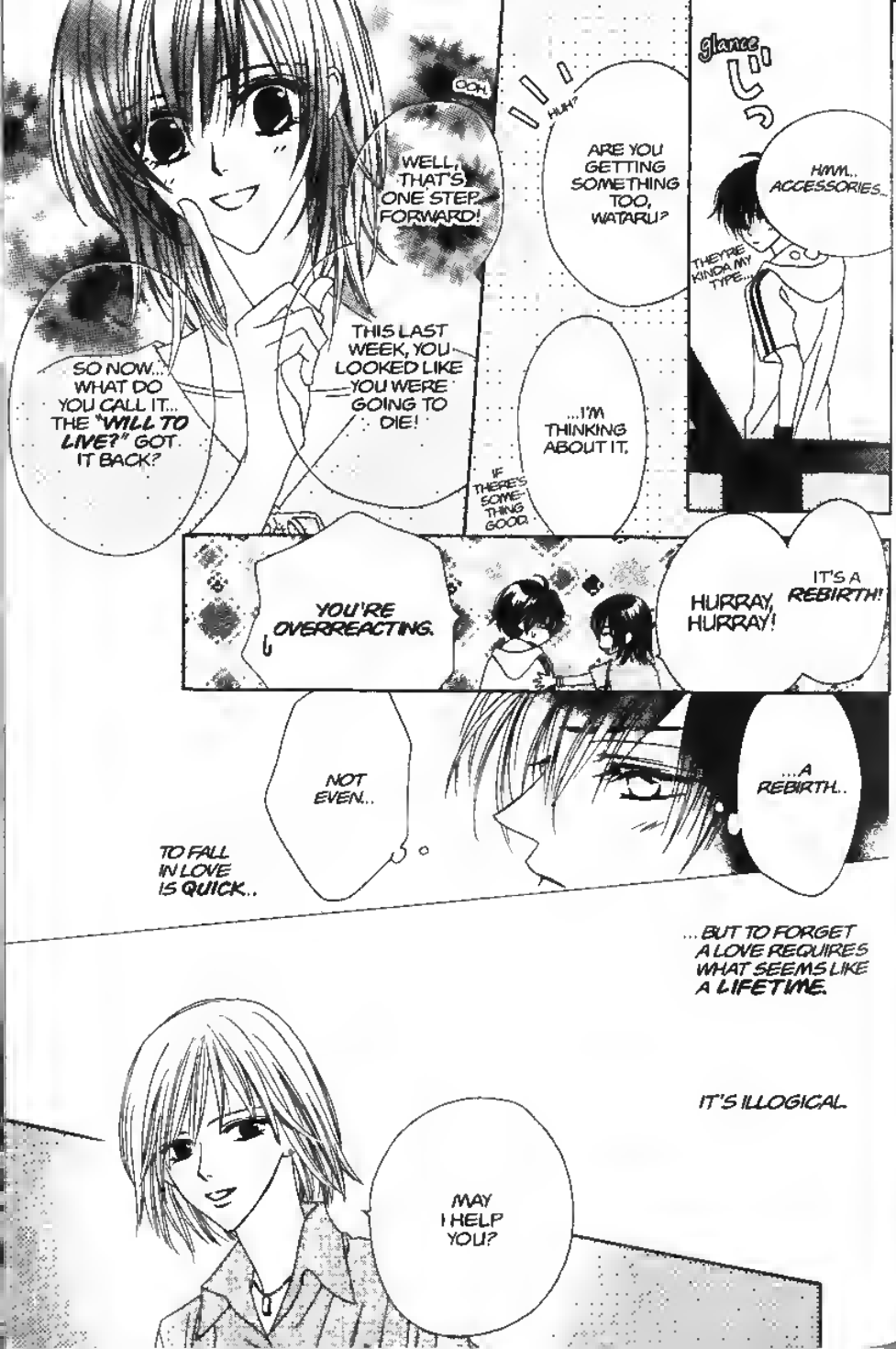
YEAH... WE OFTEN GET MISTAKEN FOR TWINS.
YOU AND YOUR SISTER... YOU LOOK ALIKE.
...THANK YOU.
BOW
YOU WENT ALL THE WAY TO HER SCHOOL TO TIE UP THE LOOSE ENDS FOR ME, RIGHT?
SHE WAS HAPPY ABOUT THAT, SO...
...I'VE GOT IT.
IT'S A GOOD IDEA, ISN'T IT?
IF I START GOING OUT WITH YOUR LITTLE SISTER, THAT RUMOR WILL BECOME THE TRUTH, RIGHT?
THEN EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT.
SHALL WE DO THAT?


IT WAS WORTH IT...
SERVES HIM RIGHT.
JUST TO BE ABLE TO SEE SUCH AN UNCOOL KAZUKI...
...AT THE END.
YOU WANTED A "LAUGHABLE KISS?"
A "LAUGHABLE KISS"...
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT...
ぽた
ぽた
YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR...
TOTALLY SUCKS..

KAZUKI,
WE'RE THROUGH!
I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
MY RING IS GONE TOO, SO EVERYTHING WORKS OUT!
HEY
WHA... JUST HOLD ON...
SLAM
NO!
GOODBYE, KAZUKI!
...THAT WASN'T LIKE HIM AT ALL.
...PANICKED LOOK ON HIS FACE...
HE HAD SUCH A...

IT'S ROUGH..
I'LL BE OKAY, KAWAMURA...
THANKS.
THOUGH I KEEP MY DISTANCE,
MY THOUGHTS KEEP TAILING AFTER KAZUKI'S SHADOW.
AND WITH EVERY THOUGHT OF HIM, MY HEART ACHES...
I CAN'T EVEN EAT.
...IT'S ROUGH.
NO...
NOTHING...
IT'S A LIE.

KNOCK KNOCK
FROM THEN ON, I DID MY BEST TO AVOID KAZUKI.
LET'S GO GRAB SOME LUNCH.
NAH... I'M GOOD.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU LATELY?!
THE RUMORS ABOUT YOU AND KAZUKI FIZZLED OUT AND HE DOESN'T BOTHER YOU ANYMORE...
EVERYTHING WORKED OUT!
SO WHY ARE YOU SO GLUM?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?


OOH.
WELL, THAT'S ONE STEP FORWARD!
SO NOW... WHAT DO YOU CALL IT... THE "WILL TO LIVE?" GOT IT BACK?
THIS LAST WEEK, YOU LOOKED LIKE YOU WERE GOING TO DIE!
YOU'RE OVERREACTING.
NOT EVEN..
TO FALL IN LOVE IS QUICK..
...BUT TO FORGET A LOVE REQUIRES WHAT SEEMS LIKE A LIFETIME.
IT'S ILLOGICAL.
MAY I HELP YOU?
HUH?
ARE YOU GETTING SOMETHING TOO, WATARU?
...I'M THINKING ABOUT IT.
IF THERE'S SOMETHING GOOD.
glance
HMM... ACCESSORIES...
THEY'RE KINDA MY TYPE...
HURRAY, HURRAY!
IT'S A REBIRTH!
...A REBIRTH..

OOHHH!
WATARU, HURRY!
URRGH.
COME ON!
GIFT! GIFT!
GET IT TOGETHER! IT'S MY BIRTHDAY!
I JUST WANT TO SPEND A QUIET DAY AT HOME...
NO! NO!
SIGH...
YOU CAN'T STAY DEPRESSED FOREVER!
LET'S GO!
YOU HAVE TO FIND A NEW LOVE!
OH.
HERE IT IS.
WHICH ONE?
I FOUND IT ON THE NET. IT SAID THAT...
..ALL THEIR ACCESSORIES ARE ORIGINALS!
ISN'T THAT GREAT?
DON'T PICK SOMETHING THAT'S TOO EXPENSIVE.

PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME.
S... SHE'S...
THE ONE WHO WAS WITH KAZUKI...
WHAT...
I THINK HER NAME WAS... "TOUKO"
IT'S HER.
THERE'S NO MISTAKE.
TO MEET HER IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...
AND WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR TODAY?
WELL RIGHT NOW, THERE ARE A LOT OF SILVER BANGLES OUT, BUT...
WHY NOT LET YOUR BOYFRIEND SPOIL YOU AND GET SOMETHING EXPENSIVE?
SINCE IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY...
OH.
NO, NO, HE'S NOT MY BOYFRIEND...
IT'S ONLY MY BROTHER, UNFORTUNATELY...

ALMOST ALL OF THE PIECES WERE CREATED BY THE OWNER.
THE OWNER...
OOH, PRETTY.
YES.
UM... THESE ARE ALL HANDMADE AT THIS STORE?
OH, HERE SHE IS.
チラ
TINK...
SHE'S THE OWNER.
OH
WELCOME.

ACTUALLY, HE IS ACTING LIKE A DEAD PERSON.
I'M SO SORRY!
...YOU'RE RIGHT.
WHOOPS...
BUT,
AS FAR AS YOU'RE CONCERNED, HE IS AS GOOD AS DEA... D...
HUH?
YOU MEAN... MR. KAZUKI?
YES.
I'M SURE HE ACTS PERFECTLY NORMAL AT SCHOOL, BUT..
THAT BOY IS SO PROUD.
I'M TOLD HE'S ALMOST COMPLETELY STOPPED SPEAKING AT HOME.
HE DOESN'T EAT AND HE STAYS COOPED UP IN HIS ROOM...
A WEEK..
IT SEEMS HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS FOR AN ENTIRE WEEK.
HEY.
SOUND LIKE SOMEBODY YOU KNOW?
Poke
Poke

HIS COUSIN..
SO SHE IS A RELATIVE...
ARE YOU...
A STUDENT AT RYOKUYO HIGH?
HUH? Y... YES, BUT...
EXCUSE ME, BUT...
THUMP
BUT WHETHER SHE'S HIS COUSIN OR HIS SECOND COUSIN..
SHE'S STILL MUCH MORE OF A CANDIDATE FOR HIS LOVE INTEREST THAN I AM.
HUH...?
I'M HIS COUSIN.
THEN DO YOU KNOW A SENIOR NAMED YUICHI KAZUKI?
KARIN... YOU'RE USING THE PAST TENSE...
HE WAS... A REALLY GREAT MAN.
HE'S HELPED MY BROTHER OUT MANY TIMES.
WE KNOW MR. KAZUKI VERY WELL!

WHAT ABOUT THAT BASKETBALL GAME...?
WITH VICTORY IN FRONT OF HIM...
BUT...
HE WAS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE OTHERS.
CLENCH
KAZUKI, THE OUTSIDER, YIELDED THE WIN TO THE TEAM.
THAT'S KAZUKI'S TRUE NATURE.
I CAN SAY THAT WITH CERTAINTY NOW.
HE'S SO PROUD.
HE SHRUGGED IT ALL OFF AS BEING "IRRITATING"...
BUT STILL, HE WAITED FOR ME TO COME AFTER HIM...
HE'S... KIND...
...ISN'T HE...
HUH...? WHAT AM I SAYING...
HE WAS CRUEL TO ME MANY TIMES.
THE ONLY KINDNESS I GOT FROM HIM WAS THAT ONE TIME IN THE LIBRARY...
HOW CAN I SAY, "HE'S KIND"...?
AND YOU DON'T KNOW THE CAUSE?
YUICHI'S BROTHER IS MARRIED AND LIVES IN ANOTHER CITY...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, BUT HIS PARENTS ARE BOTH VERY WORRIED...
BUT HE AND I GREW UP TOGETHER...
...AND THEY CAME TO DISCUSS IT WITH ME.
YUICHI WON'T SAY A WORD.
...SO WE'RE LIKE BROTHER AND SISTER.
WAS THERE ANYTHING AT SCHOOL? SOME TROUBLE...?
...TROUBLE...
OTHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF HIM ARE HIGH, TOO.
AND BECAUSE HE DOES SO WELL...
BUT SOMEHOW, I THINK THAT'S CAUSED A LOT OF STRESS FOR HIM.
THAT BOY...
EVER SINCE HE WAS A CHILD, HE'S BEEN GOOD WITH PEOPLE...

W... WHEN WAS THAT?!
HUH?
UMM...
I THINK...
IT WAS AROUND THE TIME THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS STARTED FALLING, SO...
THE SAME RING WORN BY THE PERSON HE LOVES...
THAT'S WHAT HE ASKED ME TO MAKE.
FOR HIM.
COULD IT BE THAT...
SHE MADE THAT RING...?
AND AT KAZUKI'S REQUEST?
TO OBTAIN IT, I HAD TO BE UNREASONABLE.
AND HAVE MISS TOUKO MAKE A PRESENT OF IT FOR ME.
YES... ALL I KNOW IS THAT...
...IT'S SOMEONE AT HIS SCHOOL.
THE PERSON HE LOVES...?
THAT'S ABOUT THE SAME TIME THAT I FIRST LOST MY RING...
APRIL...
YOU KNOW...
THERE'S A LINE OF CHERRY TREES FROM THE STATION ALL THE WAY TO RYOKUYO HIGH, RIGHT?
HE ASKED ME RIGHT AFTER WE HAD GONE TO SEE THEM.
...I THINK IT WAS IN APRIL...
I WONDER IF IT DIDN'T WORK OUT...
AND AFTER ALL I DID TO HELP HIM...
WHY WOULD SHE...?
HE'S LIKE SOMEONE WHO'S HAD HIS HEART BROKEN.
HELP?
HE FELT,
INSTINCTIVELY,
ISN'T SHE THE ONE KAZUKI LOVES?
IT'S HER RING THAT KAZUKI TREASURES...
HE SAID, "IT'S PRECIOUS TO ME SO I DON'T WANT TO LOSE IT."
A FRIEND MADE IT FOR HIM..
IT'S PRECIOUS TO ME SO I DON'T WANT TO LOSE IT.
A FRIEND MADE THAT FOR ME AND..
NO... WAIT A MINUTE.
THAT I WOULD UNDERSTAND...

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
IT'S THROUGH THE PARK, RIGHT?
HOME...
I'VE HEARD HE REFUSES TO STEP OUT OF HIS ROOM, SO...
Y...
YUICHI? HE'S PROBABLY AT HOME...
WATARU?!
WHAT ABOUT MY PRESENT...?
I WANT TO ASK HIM!
ARE YOU..
..IN LOVE WITH ME?
HUH?

WAIT..
BUT WASN'T HE SUPPOSED TO BE...
A STUBBORN AND PROUD AND TROUBLESOME GUY..?
ANYWAY, KAZUKI'S ATTITUDE WAS ALWAYS ONE OF ANIMOSITY TOWARDS ME
AND THAT MADE ME SAD.
THAT'S WHY I LASHED OUT AT HIM SO MANY TIMES.
AND HE WOULD JUST CALMLY TAKE IT...
IS KAZUKI SOMEHOW INVOLVED WITH THAT TOO...?
I DON'T KNOW..
I BOUGHT THAT RING AT SOME RANDOM STORE.
IT COULD BE ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE'S RING.
HUH?
EXCUSE ME, UM.. DO YOU KNOW WHERE KAZUKI IS TODAY?
AND IT HAS TO BE NOW!
I WANT TO SEE HIM!
THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT..

IT'S A SNAPSHOT OF A SCHOOL FESTIVAL OR SOMETHING...
...AND I HAPPENED TO SEE THAT HE WAS SECRETLY HIDING IT.
YUICHI...
HE HAS A PHOTO OF YOUR BROTHER.
BUT FOR AN ELITE HONOR STUDENT LIKE YUICHI...
SOMEONE HOTHEADED LIKE YOUR BROTHER IS THE PERFECT MATCH.
THEN THERE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ANY OBSTACLES.

...ARE YOU UPSET?
NO,... JUST SURPRISED.
SO WHEN I SAW WATARU TODAY, IT ALL CLICKED.
I THOUGHT, OH, I SEE...
MY LITTLE YUICHI WAS DONE IN BY THIS BOY.

WHAT?
UM...
HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN ABOUT WATARU?

AND YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TALKED ABOUT SUCH A PRIVATE MATTER SO OPENLY.
IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW HIM,
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN WHERE HE GOES TO SCHOOL JUST BY LOOKING AT HIS FACE...

I WONDER WHY YUICHI DIDN'T CHOOSE YOU.
YOU LOOK EXACTLY LIKE YOUR BROTHER.
MY, YOU'RE AN INTELLIGENT ONE.

I WANT TO SEE HIM AND BE SURE.

HIS HOUSE SHOULD JUST BE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THESE HYDRANGEA BUSHES...
THE BREAK-UP STATEMENT I MADE ONE WEEK AGO.
WILL KAZUKI LAUGH IT OFF AND FORGIVE ME...?
BABUMP BABUMP
WHAT SHOULD I SAY FIRST...?
THAT'S THE WRONG WAY.
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

FOR SOMEONE STANDING AT THE PEAK OF HAPPINESS, IT'S AN OBLIGATION.

HA HA HA
IF YUICHI BECOMES EVEN MORE MANLY THROUGH HIS LOVE FOR WATARU, THEN I HAVE NO COMPLAINTS.
IT'S MY HOBBY, YOU KNOW, TO GAZE ON YUICHI AND SHOW HIM OFF.
YAAY!
SO LET'S PICK OUT YOUR PRESENT, THEN...
AT YOUR BROTHER'S EXPENSE, OF COURSE.
GO ON AND PICK SOMETHING EXPENSIVE...
THAT'S THE LEAST HE CAN DO.

KAZUKI...

WATARU...
DO YOU...
...LOVE ME?
YEAH...
...YEAH.
I SEE...

I'VE DECIDED. I'M NEVER GOING TO BE FRIENDLY TO WOMEN AGAIN.
I'LL STOP BEING KIND TO THEM, TOO.
A... ARE YOU SURE? YOUR REPUTATION...
WHO CARES?
ACTING LIKE A CHEAP MARRIAGE CON ARTIST...
DON'T GET YOURSELF ENGAGED SO EASILY.
NEVER MIND THAT, YOU'D BETTER BE CAREFUL YOURSELF.
HUH?
MAN, YOU PISS ME OFF.

T... TO WHO?!
ENGAGED?!
I'M USED TO HAVING WOMEN CRY ON ME...
BUT THIS TIME, EVEN I WAS ANNOYED.
YOU'D BETTER APOLOGIZE TO TAKAKO LATER YOURSELF.
TAKAKO?
WHO'S THAT?
MY CUTE LITTLE NIECE...
TAKAKO KAZUKI, FIVE YEARS OLD.
HERE.

TOUKO PHONED ME.
WHEN SHE SAID YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY OVER HERE...
FOR A SECOND, I HONESTLY THOUGHT YOU WERE COMING TO PUNCH MY LIGHTS OUT.
WHY WOULD I COME TO FIGHT WITH YOU?!

BECAUSE OF THE WEIRD RUMORS YOU STARTED.
THERE WAS AN ACTUAL BATTLE ON MY BIRTHDAY, YOU KNOW.
RABBLE.
RABBLE
THE GIRLS THAT WANTED TO KNOW THE TRUTH...
...CAME DOWN IN DROVES.
ALL BEARING GIFTS...
SO THEY ALL SUSPECTED EACH OTHER...
WHO...
WHO IS IT...?
BUT NONE OF THEM KNEW WHAT YOUR SISTER LOOKED LIKE.
THE RESULT WAS AN ALL-OUT BRAWLFEST.
MERCILESS
S... SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED...

THEN, A FEW DAYS LATER, I WAS PASSING THE TIME AT THE STUDENT COUNCIL OFFICE LOOKING THROUGH SCHOOL PICTURES WHEN...
...I FOUND A SNAPSHOT OF YOU AT THE SCHOOL FESTIVAL.
OF COURSE I HAD NO IDEA WHO THE OWNER WAS...
...IT WAS A TOTAL COIN-CIDENCE...
AND TO BE HONEST, I DIDN'T MUCH CARE.
...THAT I FOUND THE RING.
YOU WERE WEARING THE RING THAT I'D FOUND.
BUT...
SO...
IT'S A GENERIC RING... IT COULD'VE BEEN ANYONE'S, RIGHT?
I SECRETLY PUT IT ON YOUR DESK...
TO SEE HOW YOU'D REACT.

OH...
I COULDN'T STAND IT IF YOU GOT ENGAGED WITHOUT MY CONSENT.
SHE WAS HERE THAT DAY ON MY BIRTHDAY... WITH MY BROTHER.
THE MINI-ATURE LONG-HAIR DACHS...
THIS... WHY...
IT'S MY...
I GOT IT BACK FOR YOU.
...
U... UMM...
...YOU SURE HAVE A MEAN STREAK...
WHEN I LOST MY RING THAT TIME...
WAS IT YOU THAT PUT IT BACK ON MY DESK...?
TOUKO TOLD YOU EVERYTHING, DIDN'T SHE?
IF IT WAS, THEN WHY DID YOU PRETEND NOT TO KNOW ABOUT IT WHEN I TOLD YOU?

I'D NEVER SEEN A SMILE LIKE THAT BEFORE.
IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT THAT I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU.
OF ALL PEOPLE,
IT TURNED OUT TO BE YOU.
WHEN WE MET COINCIDENTALLY AT THE WATER FOUNTAIN,
I PANICKED.
...
...
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW AWKWARD I FELT?
I WAS WEARING THE RING I COPIED FROM YOU.
MY ONLY THOUGHT WAS THAT I COULDN'T LET YOU SEE.

AND THEN...
SO... THAT'S HOW...
YOU SMILED.
I STOOD IN THE DOORWAY TO WATCH YOUR REACTION...
AT THE TIME, I TREATED IT AS A KIND OF GAME, SO IF I WAS WRONG, THEN THAT WAS THAT.
WHEN YOU SAW THE RING...
WHAT?
YOU WERE NEARBY?!
WHEN I FOUND THE RING...?
I WAS.
YOU WERE BEAUTIFUL.

YOUR SMILE...
I FINALLY GOT TO SEE IT.
IT'S THE SMILE I FELL IN LOVE WITH.
THAT'S NICE.
HUH?
...SINCE I NEVER EVEN DREAMED THAT IT WOULD BECOME MUTUAL BETWEEN US.
I THOUGHT I'D PROBABLY NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE IT AGAIN...
WHAT-EVER...
STUPID...
H... HUH?
EVEN IF I AM THE STUD OF THE CENTURY...
THIS WAS TOO MUCH.
OF COURSE!
HMMM...
SO THERE ARE SOME THINGS EVEN YOU THINK ARE IMPOSSIBLE.

WHY?
IF YOU'D JUST TOLD ME HONESTLY...
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW ROUGH IT WAS AFTER THAT...
TO HAVE TO TALK TO YOU...
...
...
I WAS STRUGGLING WITH MY OWN FEELINGS TOO.
MAN...
I NEVER IMAGINED THAT I'D FIND MYSELF IN LOVE WITH A YOUNGER...
KAZUKI...
COME ON, THINK ABOUT IT.
ANOTHER GUY SUDDENLY CONFESSES HIS LOVE FOR YOU...
AND YOU'D SAY "OKAY," JUST LIKE THAT?
....

SLIP
THEN...
IT'S LOGICAL FOR US TO EXCHANGE THEM, DON'T YOU AGREE?
BUT...

HUH...?
W... WHY?
I'VE GOT YOURS.
THAT ONE'S MINE.
WITH THAT WEIGHT GAIN THEORY.
WOULD YOU STOP ALREADY...
OH. THAT WON'T FIT ON YOUR MIDDLE FINGER.
WHY?! THIS LAST WEEK I SHOULD'VE LOST WEIGHT, AND YOU'RE TELLING ME I GAINED IT?!
TH.. THE RING WON'T FIT!
UGH!
YOU LOVE ME, DON'T YOU?
...HUH?
WHERE IS THIS GOING?
THINK ABOUT IT, WATARU.
BOTH OF OUR RINGS FIT THE OTHER'S RING FINGER..
THEN IT FOLLOWS THAT THE POSITION OF OUR RINGS WOULD CHANGE, RIGHT?

SPECIAL EXTRA EPISODE:

THE TWO PRINCES

AND NOW...

A STORY OF AN AFTERNOON, ONE WEEK LATER.

ABOUT YOUR RING MOVING TO THE RING FINGER,.. AND ME GETTING MY RING BACK...
STARTING TOMORROW...
...THERE'S GONNA BE MORE RUMORS ABOUT US...
HMMM...
WHY DON'T WE JUST LET THEM SAY WHAT THEY WANNA SAY?
YEAH.. I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
...AND ANYWAY...

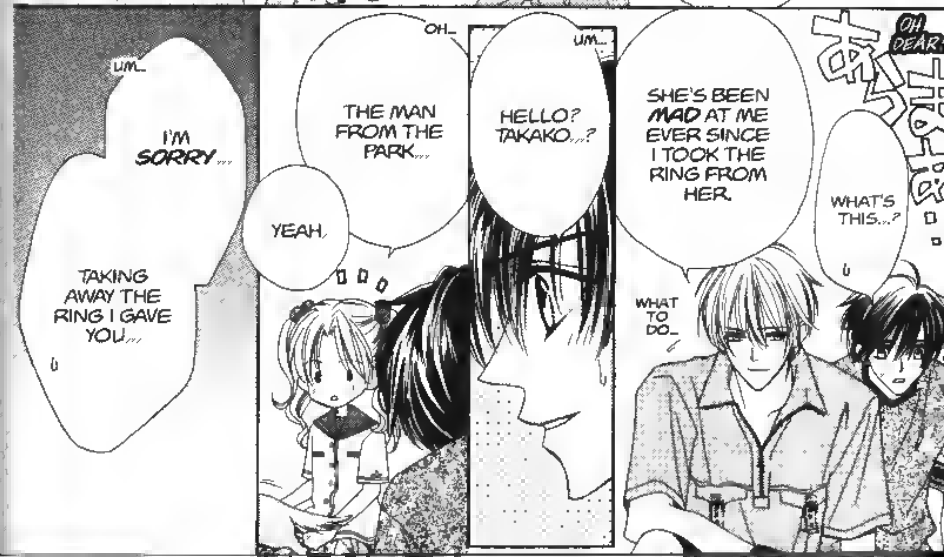
ONLY OUR RING FINGERS KNOW *THE TRUTH.*

Ring. 4 *END*

...THAT HE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO MARRY ME.
UNCLE YUICHI LOVES TAKAKO SOOO MUCH...
HUH?!..
UM... WELL... YOU SEE...
IT'S LIKE THIS...

UNCLE YUICHI IS GOING TO MARRY ME?
SO DOES THAT MEAN...
SO I HAD TO GIVE YOU UP.
I'M SORRY...?
YOU...! WHAT ARE YOU...
SHH!
HEY...
IT BACK-FIRED...

SQUEEZE
WIGGLE
WIGGLE
TAKAKO, WE'RE COMING IN.
CHAK
I HATE YOU!
HMPH!
HUF
HUF
HEY TAKAKO...


UM...
I'M SORRY...
TAKING AWAY THE RING I GAVE YOU...
OH...
THE MAN FROM THE PARK...
YEAH.
UM...
HELLO? TAKAKO...?
SHE'S BEEN MAD AT ME EVER SINCE I TOOK THE RING FROM HER.
WHAT TO DO...
OH DEAR
WHAT'S THIS...?

SO THERE'S NO WAY THAT EITHER OF US CAN MARRY TAKAKO.
SOUL
SORRY!
SEE?
US BIG BOYS ARE REEAALLY GOOD FRIENDS.
AUH?

SHE ACCEPTED IT, DIDN'T SHE?
THAT'S NOT THE POINT.
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU!
IN FRONT OF A LITTLE GIRL LIKE THAT, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING!
GOOD GIRL.
NOD
WHAT, WATARU...
YOU UNSATISFIED?

ZING
SOB
I'M SORRY, TAKAKO.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
TAKAKO WILL MARRY UNCLE YUICHI.
THAT'S OKAY THEN.
N... NO... I DIDN'T MEAN...

HEY, KAZUKI...!
T... TAKAKO...
DASH
SMOOCH
TAKAKO.
TAKE A LOOK.
SNIFF
IN FRONT OF A CHILD.

AFTERWORD

HOTARU ODAGIRI

SO READERS, WHICH BOY ARE YOU A FAN OF? WATARU OR YUICHI? I AM VERY MUCH A YUICHI FAN! (WHICH IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND...)

ONE DAY, MY EDITOR ASKED ME: "WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO SEE A MOVING YUICHI?" OF COURSE, I IMMEDIATELY REPLIED, "YEESSS!" AND SO, BECAUSE OF MY EDITOR'S BRILLIANT PSYCHOLOGICAL TACTICS AGAINST ME, I WAS PUT TO WORK ON THE PROJECT OF TURNING THIS STORY INTO A MANGA.

I WAS GREATLY THRILLED BY THE PHRASE, "A MOVING YUICHI." THE ONLY THING I FAILED TO GRASP WAS THE FACT THAT IT WOULD BE ME TASKED WITH ACCOMPLISHING THIS FEAT (I REALIZED IT TOO LATE).

WHILE WORKING ON THIS SERIES, I SUFFERED TREMENDOUS AGONIES. WITH MY LEVEL OF SKILL, I FELT THERE WAS NO WAY THAT I COULD ADEQUATELY PORTRAY YUICHI'S AMAZING APPEAL. OR, FOR THAT MATTER, WATARU'S EITHER. BUT NOW THAT IT'S OVER, LOOKING BACK, THE ONLY FEELING I HAVE LEFT WITHIN ME IS THAT "IT WAS FUN."

BEING A SLOWPOKE, EVEN WITH A SMALL WORKLOAD, I CAUSED PEOPLE TROUBLE BY ALWAYS SKIRTING ON THE CLIFF'S EDGE. EVERY ISSUE, DUE TO VARIOUS REASONS, WE WERE FORCED TO GET THE ARTWORK OUT WITH A VERY SMALL STAFF AND SOMETIMES, NEARLY KILLED OURSELVES WITH STRESS. BUT WE DID OUR BEST. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ALLOWING ME TO DO THIS PROJECT.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THESE TWO AFTER THEY BECAME A LOVING COUPLE, PLEASE DO READ ABOUT THEM IN MR. KANNAGI'S WONDERFUL NOVELS. IN THEM, YOU'LL FIND EPISODES THAT WE SADLY HAD TO CUT FROM THE MANGA DUE TO SPACE CONSTRAINTS. SO IF YOU HAVEN'T YET READ A COPY, PLEASE DO.

LASTLY, TO MY EDITOR, FOR ALWAYS PUTTING UP WITH MY RANTING AND WHINING DURING THIS SERIES, I THANK YOU (SOB). (CONTINUING EVEN AT PRESENT AND BEING A MAJOR NUISANCE...)

TO ALL THE PEOPLE WHO READ THIS, AND ALL THE PEOPLE WHO WROTE ME...A GREAT BIG THANK YOU! YOUR LETTERS REALLY ENCOURAGED ME. I WILL BE SENDING OUT REPLIES AND THINGS, SO PLEASE WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THEM.

★COME TO THINK OF IT, THIS WILL BE MY TENTH COMIC HAVING BEEN ABLE TO COME THIS FAR DESPITE MY SLOW HAND, IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU READERS. A HUGE THANK YOU!

HERE'S WATARU. ♪

Satoru Kannagi
Afterwords

FIRST OFF, LET ME CELEBRATE THE RELEASE OF THE "*ONLY THE RING FINGER KNOWS..*" COMIC! AND TO ALL THE READERS WHO KINDLY BOUGHT THIS BOOK, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
WHEN THE OFFER FOR TURNING THIS STORY INTO A MANGA FIRST CAME UP, IT DIDN'T SINK IN RIGHT AWAY. I REMEMBER JUST STANDING THERE LIKE A ZOMBIE AFTER I HUNG UP THE PHONE.
I HAVE GONE THROUGH MY WORKS MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM MAGAZINE SERIAL TO NOVEL, BUT TO ADD THE TRANSFORMATION INTO MANGA AS WELL! ON TOP OF THAT, A SERIES! THERE WILL NEVER BE ENOUGH THANKS TO GO AROUND.

BUT THAT WAS JUST THE BEGINNING. FROM THE MOMENT THE SERIES STARTED, MY HANDS SHOOK WITH EVERY TURN OF THE PAGE. I WAS ALWAYS IN SUSPENSE EVEN THOUGH I WROTE THE STORY MYSELF, AND THERE WASN'T A MOMENT WHEN I COULD READ THE MANGA CALMLY. THIS WAS ESPECIALLY TRUE OF THE LAST EPISODE. MY HEART ALMOST EXPLODED AT THE KISSING SCENE IN THE STUDENT COUNCIL ROOM, AND I WAS ALMOST K.O.'D BY KAZUKI'S SMILING FACE IN THE FINAL SCENES...AND SO IT WENT. IF SOMEONE WERE WATCHING ME, IT MUST HAVE BEEN A CREEPY SIGHT INDEED!

I WOULD NOT SAY THAT MS.ODAGIRI DREW MY STORY EXACTLY AS I IMAGINED, BUT RATHER, SHE HAS MADE THE SERIES COMPLETELY HER OWN. AS A FAN/READER MYSELF, I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED IT TO THE VERY END. HER GOOD TASTE SHOWS IN EVERY LITTLE DETAIL (SUCH AS KAZUKI'S AND WATARU'S WAY OF WEARING THEIR UNIFORMS, OR THEIR LONG, LOVELY FINGERS ON WHICH ANY RING WOULD LOOK PERFECT), AND THE GIRLS IN THE STORY ARE ALL LIKE FINE SUGAR CANDY. I WAS FILLED WITH HAPPINESS LOOKING AT EVERY INCH OF EVERY FRAME. SINCE I DIDN'T WRITE THIS STORY WITH THE INTENTION OF TURNING IT INTO A MANGA, I EXPECT THAT THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE CONVERSION...BUT AT THIS TIME, I HAVE ONLY THANKS AND MORE THANKS.

IF THERE ARE THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE CURIOUS ABOUT THESE TWO AND THE PROGRESS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP, PLEASE DO CHECK OUT THE NOVELS AS WELL.

AND NOW, I'D LIKE TO ANNOUNCE THE WINNERS OF SOME SPECIAL KANNAGI AWARDS: 1) AWARD FOR MOST WANTING TO PLAY DRESS-UP: "TAKAKO KAZUKI" 2) AWARD FOR MOST WANTING TO BE PETTED AND HEELED: "PURU" 3) AWARD FOR MOST WANTING TO KNOW WHAT HIS FIRST NAME IS: "KAWAMURA". TO THESE THREE, A WARM "THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR WORK."

SATORU KANNAGI